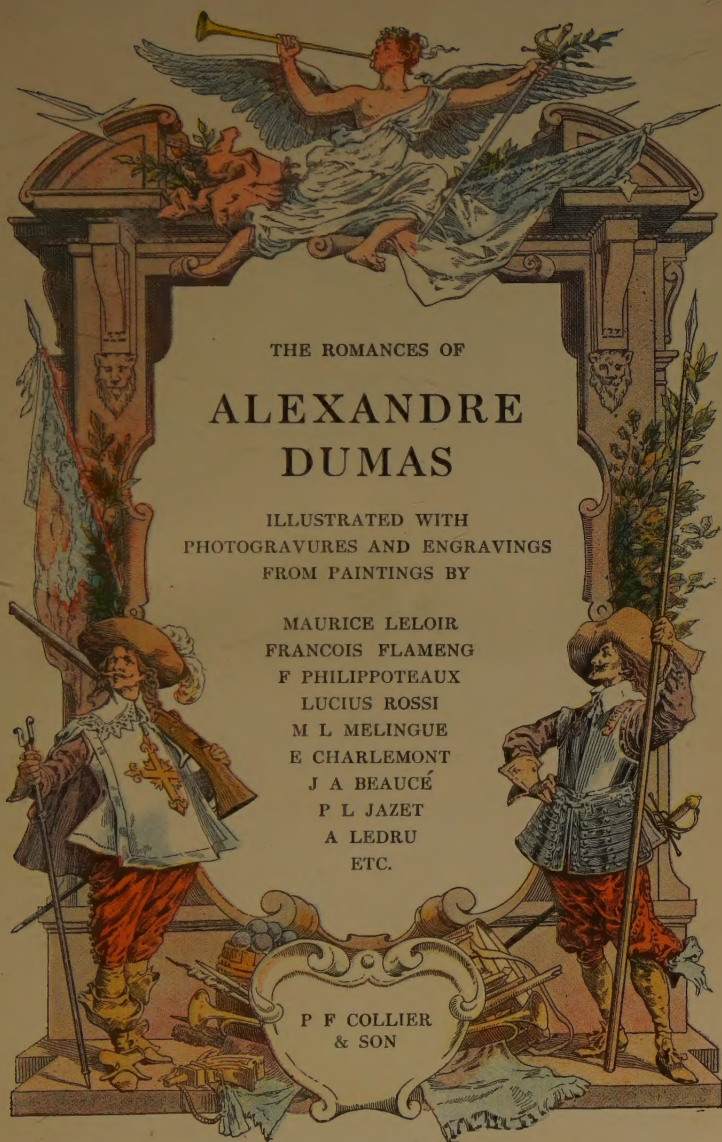


Fred W. Ilchman

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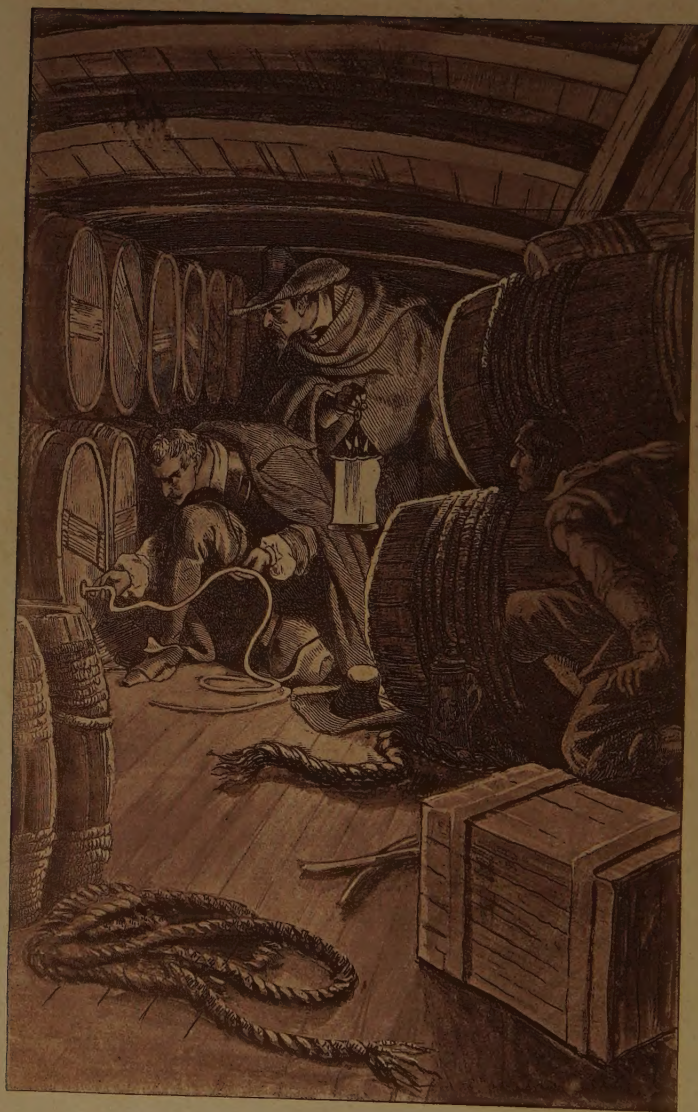
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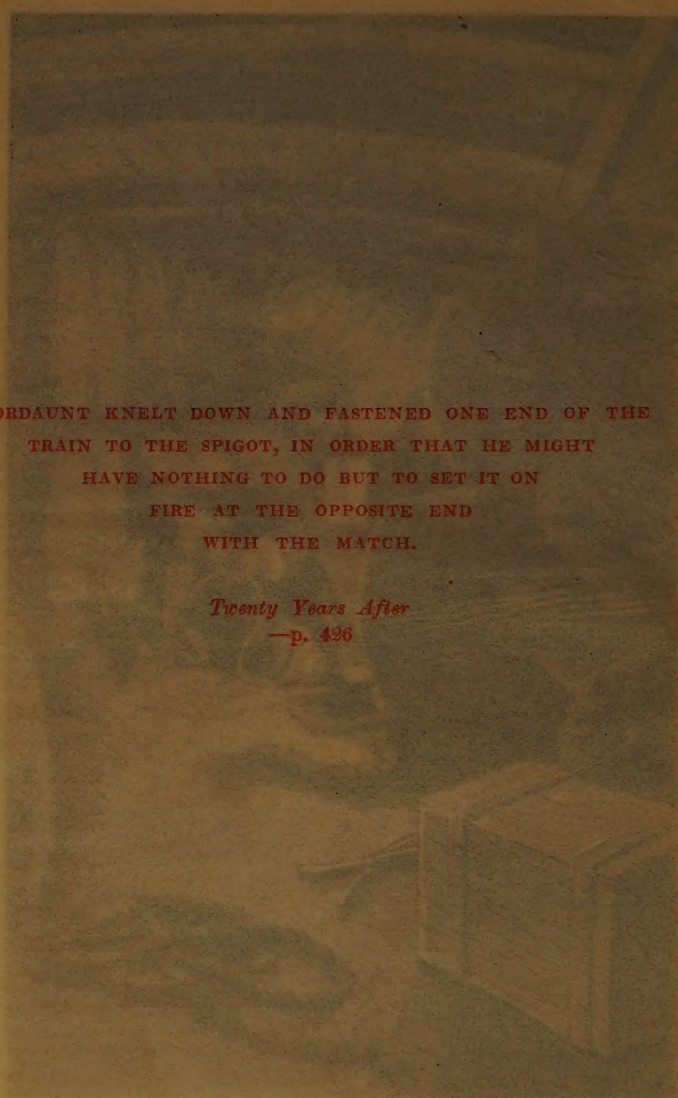
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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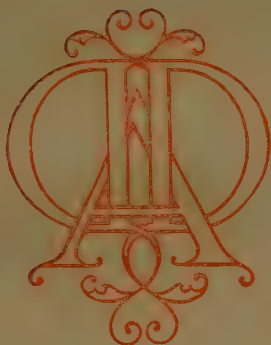
MORDAUNT KNELT DOWN AND FASTENED ONE END OF THE
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WITH THE MATCH.

Twenty Years After

—p. 426

TWENTY YEARS AFTER

ILLUSTRATED



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TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHADE OF CARDINAL RICHELIEU.

IN ONE of the rooms of the Palais Royal, in old times styled the Palais Cardinal, there sat a man in deep reverie, his head supported on his hands, leaning over a table, the corners of which were of silver-gilt, and which was covered with letters and papers. Behind this figure was a vast fireplace glowing with heat; large masses of wood blazed and crackled on the gilded andirons, and the flames shone upon the superb habiliments of the solitary inhabitant of the chamber, illumined in the foreground by a candelabra filled with wax-lights.

Any one who had happened at that moment to contemplate that red simar—the gorgeous robe of office—and the rich lace—or who gazed upon that pale brow, bent in anxious meditation, might, in the solitude of that apartment, combined with the silence of the antechambers, and the measured paces of the guards upon the landing-place, have fancied that the shade of Cardinal Richelieu still lingered in his accustomed haunt.

But it was, alas! only the ghost of former greatness. France enfeebled, the authority of her sovereign rejected, her nobles returning to their former turbulence and insolence, her enemies within her frontiers—all proved that Richelieu was no longer in existence.

In truth, that the red simar which occupied his wonted place was his no longer, was still more strikingly obvious from the isolation which seemed, as we have observed, more appropriate to a phantom than to a living creature—from the corridors, deserted by courtiers, and courts crowded with guards—from that spirit of bitter ridicule, which, arising from the streets below, penetrated through the very windows of that

room, which resounded with the murmurs of a whole city leagued against the minister, as well as from the distant and incessant sounds of guns firing—let off, happily, without other end or aim, except to show to the guards, the Swiss troops, and the military who surrounded the Palais Royal,* that the people were possessed of arms.

The shade of Richelieu was Mazarin. Now Mazarin was alone and defenseless—as he well knew.

“Foreigner!” he ejaculated, “Italian! that is their mean word of reproach—the watchword with which they assassinated, hanged, and made away with Concini, and—if I gave them their way—they would assassinate, hang, and make away with me in the same manner, although they have nothing to complain of, except a tax or two now and then. Idiots! ignorant of their real enemies, they do not perceive that it is not the Italian who speaks French badly, but those who can say fine things to them in the purest Parisian accent who are their real foes.

“Yes, yes,” Mazarin continued, while his wonted smile, full of subtlety, gave a strange expression to his pale lips; “yes, these noises prove to me, indeed, that the destiny of favorites is precarious; but ye should know that I am no ordinary favorite. No! the Earl of Essex, ’tis true, wore a splendid ring, set with diamonds, given him by his royal mistress; while I—I have nothing but a simple circlet of gold with a cypher on it and a date; but that ring has been blessed in the chapel of the Palais Royal,† so they will never ruin me as they would do; and while they shout, ‘Down with Mazarin!’ I, unknown and unperceived by them, incite them to cry out, ‘Long live the Duke de Beaufort’ one day; another, ‘Long live the Prince de Condé;’ and again, ‘Long live the Parliament!’” And, at this word, the smile on the cardinal’s lips assumed an expression of hatred, of which his mild countenance seemed incapable. “The parliament! We shall soon see how to dispose,” he continued, “of the parliament! Both Orleans and Montargis are ours. It will be a work of time! but those who have begun by crying out, ‘Down with Mazarin!’ will finish by shouting out

* The Palais Royal ceased to be called the Palais Cardinal before this epoch.

† It is said that Mazarin, who, though a cardinal, had not taken such vows as to prevent it, was secretly married to Anne of Austria.—*Le Porte’s Memoirs*.

Down with all the people I have mentioned, each in his turn.

“Richelieu, whom they hated during his lifetime, and whom they now praise after his death, was even less popular than I am. Often was he driven away—oftener still had he a dread of being sent away. The queen will never banish me; and even were I obliged to yield to the populace, she would yield with me; if I fly, she will fly; and then we shall see how the rebels will get on without either king or queen.

“Oh, were I not a foreigner! were I but a Frenchman! would I were even merely a gentleman!”

The position of the cardinal was, indeed, critical, and several recent events added to his difficulties. Discontent had long pervaded the lower ranks of society in France. Crushed and impoverished by taxation—imposed by Mazarin, whose avarice impelled him to grind them down to the very dust—the people, as the Advocate-General Talon described it, had nothing left to them except their souls; and as those could not be sold by auction, they began to murmur. Patience had in vain been recommended to them, by reports of brilliant victories gained by France; laurels, however, were not meat and drink; and the people had for some time been in a state of discontent.

Had this been all, it might not, perhaps, have greatly signified; for, when the lower classes alone complained, the court of France, separated as it was from the poor by the intervening classes of the gentry and the *bourgeoisie*, seldom listened to their voice; but, unluckily, Mazarin had had the imprudence to attack the magistrates, and had sold no less than ten appointments in the Court of Requests, at a high price; and, as the officers of that court paid very dear for their places, and as the addition of twelve new colleagues would necessarily lower the value of each place, the old functionaries formed an union among themselves, and, enraged, swore on the Bible not to allow this addition to their number, but to resist all the persecutions which might ensue; and should any one of them chance to forfeit his post by this resistance, to combine to indemnify him for his loss.

Now the following occurrences had taken place between the two contending parties.

On the seventh of January, between seven and eight hundred tradesmen had assembled in Paris to discuss a new tax which was to be levied on house property. They deputed ten of their number to wait upon the Duke of Orleans, who, according to custom, affected popularity. The duke received

them, and they informed him that they were resolved not to pay this tax, even if they were obliged to defend themselves against the collectors of it by force of arms. They were listened to with great politeness by the duke, who held out hopes of more moderate measures; promised them to speak in their behalf to the queen; and dismissed them with the ordinary expression of royalty—"We shall see what we can do."

Two days afterward these same magistrates appeared before the cardinal, and the spokesman among them addressed Mazarin with so much fearlessness and determination, that the minister was astounded, and sent the deputation away with the same answer as it had received from the Duke of Orleans—that he would see what could be done: and, in accordance with that intention, a council of state was assembled, and the superintendent of finance was summoned.

This man, named Emery, was the object of popular detestation—in the first place, because he *was* superintendent of finance, and every superintendent of finance deserved to be hated; in the second place, because he rather deserved the odium which he had incurred.

He was the son of a banker at Lyons, named Particelli, who, after becoming a bankrupt, choose to change his name to Emery; and Cardinal Richelieu, having discovered in young Emery great financial aptitude, had introduced him with a strong recommendation to Louis XIII. under his assumed name, in order that he might be appointed to the post which he subsequently held.

"You surprise me!" exclaimed the monarch. "I am rejoiced to hear you speak of Monsieur d'Emery as calculated for a post which requires a man of probity. I was really afraid that you were going to force that villain Particelli upon me."

"Sire," replied Richelieu, "rest assured that Particelli—the man to whom your majesty refers—has been hanged."

"Ah, so much the better!" exclaimed the king. "It is not for nothing that I am styled Louis the Just"—and he signed Emery's appointment.

This was the same Emery who had become eventually superintendent of finance.

He was sent for by the ministers, and he came before them pale and trembling, declaring that his son had very nearly been assassinated the day before near the palace. The mob had insulted him on account of the ostentatious luxury of his wife, whose house was hung with red velvet, edged with gold fringe. This lady was the daughter of Nicholas de Camus,

who had arrived in Paris with twenty francs in his pocket—had become secretary of state—and had accumulated wealth enough to divide nine millions of francs among his children, and to keep forty thousand for himself.

The fact was, that Emery's son had run a great chance of being suffocated; one of the rioters having proposed to squeeze him until he gave up all the gold he had swallowed. Nothing, therefore, was settled that day, as Emery's head was not steady enough for business after such an occurrence.

Other disturbances had followed this outrage.

Matthew Mole, chief president of the parliament, and esteemed equal in courage to Condé and De Beaufort, had been insulted and threatened. The queen in going to mass at Notre Dame, as she always did on Saturdays, was followed by more than two hundred women, demanding justice. These poor creatures had no bad intentions. They wished only to be allowed to fall on their knees before their sovereign, and that they might move her to compassion; but they were prevented by the royal guard, and the queen proceeded on her way, haughtily disdainful of their entreaties.

At length parliament was convoked—the authority of the king was to be maintained.

One day—it was the morning of that when my story begins—the king, Louis XIV., then ten years of age, went in state, under pretext of returning thanks for his recovery from the smallpox, to Notre Dame. He took the opportunity of calling on his guard, the Swiss troops, and the musketeers, and he had planted them round the Palais Royal, on the quays, and on the Pont Neuf. After mass the young monarch drove to the parliament house, where, upon the throne, he hastily confirmed not only the edicts which he had already passed, but issued new ones; each one, according to Cardinal de Retz, more ruinous than the others—a proceeding which drew forth a strong remonstrance from the chief president Mole—while President Blancmesnil and Councillor Broussel raised their voices in indignation against fresh taxes.

The king returned amid the silence of a vast multitude to the Palais Royal. All minds were uneasy—most were foreboding—many of the people using threatening language.

At first, indeed, they were doubtful whether the king's visit to the parliament had been in order to lighten or to increase their burdens; but scarcely was it known that the taxes were even to be increased, than cries of “Down with Mazarin!” “Long live Broussel!” “Long live Blancmesnil!” resounded through the city. All attempts to disperse the

groups now collected in the streets, or to silence their exclamations, were vain. Orders had just been given to the royal guard, and to the Swiss guards, not only to stand firm, but to send out patrols to the streets of Saint Denis and Saint Martin, where the people thronged, and where they were the most vociferous, when the mayor of Paris was announced at the Palais Royal.

He was shown in directly; he came to say that if these offensive precautions were not discontinued, in two hours Paris would be under arms.

Deliberations were being held, when a lieutenant in the guards, named Comminges, made his appearance, with his clothes all torn, his face streaming with blood. The queen, on seeing him, uttered a cry of surprise, and asked him what was going on.

As the mayor had foreseen, the sight of the guards had exasperated the mob. The tocsin was sounded. Comminges had arrested one of the ringleaders, and had ordered him to be hanged near the cross of Du Trahoir; but, in attempting to execute this command, the soldiery were attacked in the market-place with stones and halberds; the delinquents all escaped to the Rue des Lombards, and rushed into a house. They broke open the doors, and searched the dwelling, but in vain. Comminges, wounded by a stone which had struck him on the forehead, had left a picquet in the street, and returned to the Palais Royal, followed by a menacing crowd, to tell his story.

This account confirmed that of the mayor. The authorities were not in a condition to contend with a serious revolt. Mazarin endeavored to circulate among the people a report that troops had only been stationed on the quays, and on the Pont Neuf, on account of the ceremonial of the day, and that they would soon withdraw. In fact, about four o'clock they were all concentrated about the Palais Royal, the courts and ground floors of which were filled with musketeers and Swiss guards, and there awaited the event of all this disturbance.

Such was the state of affairs at the very moment when we introduced our readers into the study of Cardinal Mazarin—once that of Cardinal Richelieu. We have seen in what state of mind he listened to the murmurs from below, which even reached him in his seclusion, and to the guns, the firing of which resounded in that room. All at once he raised his head: his brow slightly contracted, like that of a man who has formed a resolution; he fixed his eyes upon an enormous

clock which was about to strike ten, and taking up a whistle of silver gilt, which was placed on the table near him, he whistled twice.

A door hidden in the tapestry opened noiselessly, and a man in black stood behind the chair on which Mazarin sat.

"Bernouin," said the cardinal, not turning round, for, having whistled, he knew that it was his valet-de-chambre who was behind him, "what musketeers are there in the palace?"

"The Black Musketeers, my lord."

"What company?"

"Tréville's company."

"Is there any officer belonging to this company in the antechamber?"

"Lieutenant d'Artagnan."

"A man on whom we can depend, I hope."

"Yes, my lord."

"Give me a uniform of one of these musketeers, and help me to dress."

The valet went out as silently as he came in, and appeared in a few minutes, bringing the dress which was asked for.

The cardinal, in deep thought and in silence, began to take off the robes of state which he had assumed in order to be present at the sitting of parliament, and to attire himself in the military coat, which he wore with a certain degree of easy grace, owing to his former campaigns in Italy. When he was completely dressed, he said:

"Bring Monsieur d'Artagnan hither."

The valet went out of the room, this time by the center door, but still as silently as before; one might have fancied him an apparition.

When he was left alone, the cardinal looked at himself in the glass with a feeling of self-satisfaction. Still young—for he was scarcely forty-six years of age—he possessed great elegance of form, and was above the middle height; his complexion was brilliant and beautiful; his glance full of expression; his nose, though large, was well-proportioned; his forehead broad and majestic; his hair, of a chestnut color, was rather frizzed; his beard, which was darker than his hair, was turned carefully with a curling-iron, a practice which greatly improved it. After a short time the cardinal arranged his shoulder-belt, then looked with great complacency at his hands, which were very beautiful, and of which he took the greatest care; and throwing on one side the large kid gloves which he tried on at first, as belonging to the uniform, he put on others of silk only. At this instant the door opened.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the valet-de-chambre.

An officer, as he spoke, entered the apartment. He was a man between thirty-nine and forty years of age, of a small but well-proportioned figure; thin, with an intellectual and animated physiognomy; his beard black and his hair turning gray, as often happens when people have found this life either too gay or too sad, more especially when they happen to be of a dark complexion.

D'Artagnan advanced a few steps into the apartment. How perfectly he remembered his former entrance into that very room. Seeing, however, no one there except a musketeer of his own troop, he fixed his eyes upon the supposed soldier, in whose dress, nevertheless, he recognized, at the first glance, the cardinal.

The lieutenant remained standing in a dignified but respectful posture, such as became a man of good birth, who had in the course of his life been frequently in the society of the highest nobles.

The cardinal looked at him with a glance, cunning rather than serious; yet he examined his countenance with attention, and after a momentary silence said:

"You are Monsieur d'Artagnan?"

"I am that individual," replied the officer.

Mazarin gazed once more at a countenance full of intelligence, the play of which had been nevertheless subdued by age and experience; and D'Artagnan received the penetrating glance like one who had formerly sustained many a searching look, very different, indeed, from those which were inquiringly directed toward him at that instant.

"Sir," resumed the cardinal, "you are to come with me, or rather I am to go with you."

"I am at your commands, my lord," returned D'Artagnan.

"I wish to visit in person the outposts which surround the Palais Royal. Do you suppose that there is any danger in so doing?"

"Danger, my lord!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, with a look of astonishment; "what danger?"

"I am told that there is a general insurrection."

"The uniform of the king's musketeers carries a certain respect with it; and even if that were not the case, I would engage, with four of my men, to put to flight an hundred of these clowns."

"Did you witness the injuries sustained by Comminges?"

"Monsieur de Comminges is in the guards, and not in the musketeers——"

"Which means, I suppose, that the musketeers are better soldiers than the guards." The cardinal smiled as he spoke.

"Every one likes his own uniform best, my lord."

"Myself excepted;" and again Mazarin smiled; "for you perceive that I have left off mine, and put on yours."

"Lord bless us! this is modesty, indeed," cried D'Artagnan. "Had I such a uniform as your eminence possesses, I protest I should be mighty content; and I would take an oath never to wear any other costume——"

"Yes, but for to-night's adventure, I don't suppose my dress would have been a very safe one. Give me my felt hat, Bernouin."

The valet instantly brought to his master a regimental hat with a wide brim. The cardinal put it on in a military style.

"Your horses are already saddled in their stables, are they not?" he said, turning to D'Artagnan.

"Yes, my lord."

"Well, let us set out."

"How many men does your eminence wish to escort you?"

"You say that with four men you will undertake to disperse a hundred low fellows; as it may happen that we shall have to encounter two hundred, take eight——"

"As many as my lord wishes."

"I shall follow you. This way—light us downstairs, Bernouin."

The valet held a wax-light; the cardinal took a key from his bureau, and opening the door of a secret stair, descended into the court of the Palais Royal.

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHTLY PATROL.

IN TEN minutes Mazarin and his party were traversing the street "Les Bons Enfants," behind the theater built by Richelieu expressly for the play of "Mirame," and in which Mazarin, who was an amateur of music, but not of literature, had introduced into France the first opera that was ever acted in that country.

The appearance of the town denoted the greatest agitation. Numberless groups paraded the streets; and, whatever D'Artagnan might think of it, it was obvious that the citizens had for the night laid aside their usual forbearance, in order to assume a warlike aspect. From time to time

noises came in the direction of the public markets. The report of firearms was heard near the Rue St. Denis, and occasionally church bells began to ring indiscriminately, and at the caprice of the populace. D'Artagnan, meantime, pursued his way with the indifference of a man upon whom such acts of folly made no impression. The cardinal envied his composure, which he ascribed to the habit of encountering danger. On approaching an outpost near the Barrière des Sergens, the sentinel cried out, "Who's there?" and D'Artagnan answered—having first asked the word of the cardinal—"Louis and Rocroy." After which he inquired if Lieutenant Comminges were not the commanding officer at the outpost. The soldier replied by pointing out to him an officer who was conversing, on foot, with his hand upon the neck of a horse on which the individual to whom he was talking sat. Here was the officer whom D'Artagnan was seeking.

"Here is Monsieur Comminges," said D'Artagnan, returning to the cardinal. He instantly retired, from a respectful delicacy; it was, however, evident that the cardinal was recognized by both Comminges and the other officer on horseback.

"Well done, Guitant," cried the cardinal to the equestrian; "I see plainly, that notwithstanding the sixty-four years which have passed over your head, you are still the same man, active and zealous. What were you saying to this youngster?"

"My lord," replied Guitant, "I was observing that we live in strange times, and that to-day's events are very like those in the days of the Ligue, of which I heard so much in my youth. Are you aware that the mob have even suggested throwing up barricades in the Rue Saint Denis and the Rue Saint Antoine?"

"And what was Comminges saying to you in reply, dear Guitant?"

"My lord," said Comminges, "I answered that to compose a Ligue, only one ingredient was wanting—in my opinion an essential one—a Duc de Guise—moreover, no one ever does the same thing twice over."

"No, but they mean to make a Fronde, as they call it," said Guitant.

"And what is a Fronde?" inquired Mazarin.

"My lord, a Fronde is the name that the discontented give to their party."

"And what is the origin of this name?"

"It seems that some days since, Counsellor Backaumont

remarked at the palace that rebels and agitators reminded him of schoolboys slinging stones from the moats round Paris—young urchins who run off the moment the constable appears, only to return to their diversion the instant that his back is turned. So they have picked up the word, and the insurrectionists are called ‘Frondeurs;’ and yesterday every article sold was ‘à la Fronde;’ bread ‘à la Fronde,’ hats ‘à la Fronde,’ to say nothing of gloves, pocket handkerchiefs, and fans—but listen——”

At that moment a window opened, a man began to sing—

“A breeze from the Fronde
Blew to-day;
I think that it blows
Against Mazarin.”

“Insolent wretch!” cried Guitant.

“My lord,” said Comminges, who, irritated by his wounds, wished for revenge, and longed to give back blow for blow, “shall I fire off a ball to punish that jester, and to warn him not to sing so much out of tune in future?”

And, as he spoke, he put his hand on the holster of his uncle’s saddle-bow.

“Certainly not—certainly not!” exclaimed Mazarin. “*Diavolo!* my dear friend, you are going to spoil everything—everything is going on famously. I know the French as well as if I had made them myself from first to last. They sing—let them pay the piper. During the Ligue, about which Guitant was speaking just now, the people chanted nothing except the mass, so everything went to destruction. Come, Guitant, come along, and let’s see if they keep watch at the Quinze-Vingts as at the Barrière des Sergens.”

And, waving his hand to Comminges, he rejoined D’Artagnan, who instantly put himself at the head of his troop, followed by the cardinal, Guitant, and the rest of the escort.

“Just so,” muttered Comminges, looking after Mazarin. “True, I forgot—provided he can get money out of the people, that is all he wants.”

The street of Saint Honoré, when the cardinal and his party passed through it, was crowded by an assemblage, who, standing in groups, discussed the edicts of that memorable day—they pitied the young king, who was unconsciously ruining his country, and threw all the odium of his proceedings on Mazarin. Addresses to the Duke of Orleans and to Condé were suggested. Blancmesnil and Broussel seemed in high favor.

D'Artagnan passed through the very midst of this discontented multitude, just as if his horse and he had been made of iron. Mazarin and Guitant conversed together in whispers. The musketeers, who had already discovered who Mazarin was, followed in profound silence. In the street of Saint Thomas-du-Louvre, they stopped at that barrier which was distinguished by the name of *Quinze-Vingts*. Here Guitant spoke to one of the subalterns, and asked him how matters went on.

"Ah, captain!" said the officer, "everything is quiet hereabouts—if I did not know that something is going on in yonder house!"

And he pointed to a magnificent hotel, situated on the very spot whereon the *Vaudeville* now stands.

"In that hotel?—it is the *Hotel Rambouillet*," cried Guitant.

"I really don't know what hotel it is—all I do know is that I observed some suspicious-looking people go in there——"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Guitant, with a burst of laughter, "those men must be poets."

"Come, Guitant, speak, if you please, respectfully of these gentlemen," said Mazarin; "don't you know that I was in my youth a poet? I wrote verses in the style of *Beuserade*——"

"You, my lord?"

"Yes, I—shall I repeat to you some of my verses?"

"Just as you please, my lord. I do not understand Italian."

"Yes, but you understand French;" and Mazarin laid his hand upon Guitant's shoulder. "My good, my brave Guitant, whatsoever command I may give you in that language—in French—whatever I may order you to do, will you not do it?"

"Certainly. I have already answered that question in the affirmative; but that command must come from the queen herself."

"Yes! ah, yes!" (Mazarin bit his lips as he spoke.) "I know your devotion to her majesty."

"I have been a captain in the queen's guards for twenty years," was the reply.

D'Artagnan, in the meantime, had taken the head of his detachment without a word, and with that ready and profound obedience which marks the character of an old soldier.

He led the way toward the hut of Saint Roche. The *Rue Richelieu* and the *Rue Villedot* were then, owing to their vicinity to the ramparts, less frequented than any others in that direction, for the town was thinly inhabited thereabouts.

He therefore chose these streets to pass through in preference to those more crowded.

"Who is in command here?" asked the cardinal.

"Villequier," said Guitant.

"*Diavolo!* Speak to him yourself, for ever since you were deputed by me to arrest the Duc de Beaufort, this officer and I have been on bad terms. He laid claim to that honor as captain of the royal guards."

Guitant accordingly rode forward, and desired the sentinel to call Monsieur de Villequier.

"Ah! so you are here!" cried the officer, in a tone of ill-humor habitual to him; "what the devil are you doing here?"

"I wish to know—can you tell me, pray—is there anything fresh happening in this part of the town?"

"What do you mean? People cry out, 'Long live the king! down with Mazarin'—that's nothing new—no, we've been used to those acclamations for some time."

"And you sing chorus," replied Guitant, laughing.

"Faith, I've half a mind to do it. In my opinion the people are right: and cheerfully would I give up five years of my pay—which I am never paid, by the way—to make the king five years older."

"Really! And pray what is to come to pass supposing the king were five years older than he is?"

"As soon as ever the king comes of age, he will issue his commands himself, and 'tis far pleasanter to obey the grandson of Henry IV. than the grandson of Peter Mazarin. S'death! I would die willingly for the king; but supposing I happened to be killed on account of Mazarin, as your nephew was near being to-day, there could be nothing in Paradise—so well off as I have been in this world—that could console me for being a martyr."

"Well, well, Monsieur de Villequier," here Mazarin interposed, "I shall take care that the king hears of your loyalty. Come, gentlemen," he addressed the troop, "let us return."

"Stop," exclaimed Villequier; "so, Mazarin is here! so much the better. I have been wanting for a long time to tell him what I think of him. I'm obliged to you, Guitant, for this opportunity."

He turned away, and went off to his post, whistling a tune, then popular among the party called the "Fronde," while Mazarin returned, in a pensive mood, toward the Palais Royal. All that he had heard from these three different men, Comminges, Guitant, and Villequier, confirmed him in his con-

viction that in case of serious tumults there would be no one on his side except the queen: and then, Anne of Austria had so often deserted her friends, that her support seemed very precarious. During the whole of this nocturnal ride, during the whole time that he was endeavoring to understand the various characters of Comminges, Guitant, and Villequier, Mazarin was, in truth, studying more especially one man. This man—who had remained immovable when menaced by the mob—not a muscle of whose face was altered either by Mazarin's witticisms, or by the jests of the multitude—seemed to the cardinal a peculiar being, who, having participated in past events similar to those which were now occurring, was calculated to cope with those which were on the eve of taking place.

The name of D'Artagnan was not altogether new to Mazarin, who, although he had not arrived in France before the year 1634, or 1635, that is to say, about eight or nine years after the events which we have related in a preceding narrative,* fancied that he had heard it pronounced, in reference to one who was said to be a model of courage, address, and loyalty.

Possessed by this idea, the cardinal resolved to know all about D'Artagnan immediately; of course he could not inquire from D'Artagnan himself who he was, and what had been his career; he remarked, however, in the course of conversation, that the lieutenant of musketeers spoke with a Gascon accent. Now the Italians and the Gascons are too much alike, and know each other too well, ever to trust to what any one of them may say of himself; so, on reaching the walls which surrounded the Palais Royal, the cardinal knocked at a little door, and after thanking D'Artagnan, and requesting him to wait in the court of the Palais Royal, he made a sign to Guitant to follow him in.

"My dear friend," said the cardinal, leaning, as they walked through the gardens, on his friend's arm, "you told me just now that you had been twenty years in the queen's service."

"Yes, 'tis true; I have," returned Guitant.

"Now, my dear Guitant, I have often remarked that in addition to your courage—which is indisputable, and to your fidelity—which is invincible, you possess an admirable memory."

* In the "Three Guardsmen."

"You have found that out, have you, my lord? Deuce take it—all the worse for me!"

"How?"

"There's no doubt but that one of the chief qualities in a courtier is to know when to forget."

"But you, Guitant, are not a courtier. You are a brave soldier, one of the few remaining veterans of the days of Henry IV.—alas! how few exist still!——"

"Plague on't, my lord—have you brought me here to get my horoscope out of me?"

"No—I only brought you here to ask you," returned Mazarin, smiling, "if you have taken any particular notice of our lieutenant of musketeers?"

"Monsieur D'Artagnan? I do not care to notice him particularly; he's an old acquaintance. He's a Gascon. DeTréville knows him, and esteems him greatly, and De Tréville, as you know, is one of the queen's greatest friends. As a soldier the man ranks well: he did his duty, and even more than his duty, at the siege of Rochelle—as well as at Suze and Perpignan."

"But you know, Guitant, we poor ministers often want men with other qualities besides courage; we want men of talent. Pray was not Monsieur d'Artagnan, in the time of the cardinal, mixed up in some intrigue from which he came out, according to report, rather cleverly?"

"My lord, as to the report you allude to"—Guitant perceived that the cardinal wished to make him speak out—"I know nothing but what the public knows. I never meddle in intrigues; and if I occasionally become a confidant in the intrigues of others, I am sure your eminence will approve of my keeping them secret."

Mazarin shook his head.

"Ah!" he said; "some ministers are very fortunate, and find out all that they wish to know."

"My lord," replied Guitant, "such ministers do not weigh men in the same balance; they get their information on war from the warriors; on intrigues, from the politician. Consult some politician of the period of which you speak, and if you pay well for it, you will certainly get to know all you want."

Mazarin, with a grimace which he always made when spoken to about money—"People must be paid—one can't do otherwise," he said.

"Does my lord seriously wish me to name any one who has been mixed up in the cabals of that day?"

"By Bacchus!" rejoined Mazarin, impatiently, "it's about

an hour ago since I asked you a question about d'Artagnan, wooden-headed as you are."

"There is one man for whom I can answer, if he will speak out."

"That's my concern; I must make him speak."

"Ah! my lord, 'tis not easy to make people say what they don't wish to let out."

"Pooh! patience (we are coming to it at last). Well, this man. Who is he?"

"The Comte de Rochefort."

"The Comte de Rochefort!"

"Unfortunately he has disappeared these four or five years, and I don't know where he is."

"I know, Guitant," said Mazarin.

"Well, then, how is it that your eminence complained just now of want of information on some points?"

"You think," resumed Mazarin, "that Rochefort——"

"He was Cardinal Richelieu's creature, my lord. I warn you, however, his services will be expensive. The cardinal was lavish to his underlings."

"Yes, yes, Guitant," said Mazarin; "Richelieu was a great man, a very great man, but he had that defect. Thanks, Guitant; I shall benefit by your advice this very evening."

Here they separated, and bidding adieu to Guitant in the court of the Palais Royal, Mazarin approached an officer who was walking up and down within that enclosure.

It was D'Artagnan, who was waiting for him.

"Come hither," said Mazarin, in his softest voice, "I have an order to give you."

D'Artagnan bent low, and following the cardinal up the secret staircase, soon found himself in the study whence he had first set out.

The cardinal seated himself before his bureau, and taking a sheet of paper, wrote some lines upon it, while D'Artagnan remained standing, imperturbable, and without showing either impatience or curiosity. He was like a military automaton acting (or, rather, obeying the will of others) upon springs.

The cardinal folded and sealed his letter.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," he said, "you are to take this dispatch to the Bastille, and to bring back here the person whom it concerns. You must take a carriage and an escort, and guard the prisoner carefully."

D'Artagnan took the letter, touched his hat with his hand, turned round upon his heel, like a drill-sergeant, and, a mo-

ment afterward, was heard in his dry and monotonous tone, commanding, "Four men and an escort, a carriage and a horse." Five minutes afterward the wheels of the carriage and the horses' shoes were heard resounding on the pavement of the courtyard.

CHAPTER III.

OLD ANIMOSITIES.

D'Artagnan arrived at the Bastille just as it was striking half-past eight. His visit was announced to the governor, who, on hearing that he came from the cardinal, went to meet him, and received him at the top of the great flight of steps outside the door. The governor of the Bastille was Monsieur du Tremblay, the brother of the famous capuchin, Joseph, that fearful favorite of Richelieu's, who went by the name of the Gray Cardinal.

During the period that the Duc de Bassompierre passed in the Bastille—where he remained for twelve whole years—when his companions, in their dreams of liberty, said to each other, "As for me, I shall go out of prison at such a time," and another, at such and such a time, the duke used to answer, "As for me, gentlemen, I shall leave only when Monsieur du Tremblay leaves;" meaning that at the death of the cardinal, Du Tremblay would certainly lose his place at the Bastille, and then De Bassompierre would regain his at court.

His prediction was nearly being fulfilled, but in a very different way to that which De Bassompierre supposed; for, after the death of Richelieu, everything went on, contrary to expectation, in the same way as before; and Bassompierre had little chance of leaving his prison.

Monsieur du Tremblay received D'Artagnan with extreme politeness, and invited him to sit down with him to supper, of which he was himself about to partake.

"I should be delighted to do so," was the reply; "but if I am not much mistaken, the words, 'In haste,' are written on the envelope of the letter which I brought."

"You are right," said Du Tremblay. "Halloo, major, tell them to order number 256 to come downstairs."

The unhappy wretch who entered into the Bastille ceased, as he crossed the threshold, to be a man, and became a number.

D'Artagnan shuddered at the noise of the keys; he there-

fore remained on horseback, having no inclination to dismount, and sat looking at the bars, at the thick strong windows, and the immense walls which he had hitherto only seen from the other side of the moat, and by which he had, for twenty years, been awestruck.

A bell sounded.

"I must leave you," said Du Tremblay; "I am sent for to sign the release of the prisoner. I shall be happy to meet you again, sir."

"May the devil annihilate me if I return thy wish!" murmured D'Artagnan, smiling as he pronounced the imprecation; "I declare I feel quite ill, after only being five minutes in the courtyard. Go to—go to! I should rather die upon straw, than hoard up five hundred a-year by being governor of the Bastille."

He had scarcely finished this soliloquy before the prisoner arrived. On seeing him D'Artagnan could hardly suppress an exclamation of surprise. The prisoner did not seem, however, to recognize the musketeer.

"Gentlemen," thus D'Artagnan addressed the four musketeers, "I am ordered to exercise the greatest possible care in guarding the prisoner; and since there are no locks to the carriage, I shall sit beside him. Monsieur de Lillebonne, lead my horse by the bridle, if you please." As he spoke he dismounted, gave the bridle of his horse to the musketeer, and placing himself by the side of the prisoner, said, in a voice perfectly composed, 'To the Palais Royal, at a full trot.'

The carriage drove on, and D'Artagnan, availing himself of the darkness of the archway under which they were passing, threw himself into the arms of the prisoner.

"Rocheport!" he exclaimed; "you—is it you; you indeed? I am not mistaken?"

"D'Artagnan!" cried Rocheport.

"Ah! my poor friend!" resumed D'Artagnan, "not having seen you for four or five years, I concluded that you were dead."

"I'faith," said Rocheport, "there's no great difference, I think, between a dead man and one who has been buried alive; now I have been buried alive, or very nearly so."

"And for what crime are you imprisoned in the Bastille?"

"Do you wish me to speak the truth to you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I don't know."

"Have you any suspicion of me, Rocheport?"

"No! on the honor of a gentleman; but I cannot be imprisoned for the reason alleged—it is impossible."

"What reason?" asked D'Artagnan.

"For stealing."

"For stealing! you—Rochefort—you are laughing at me. It is impossible that it could have been that, my dear Rochefort, which was alleged against you; it is a mere pretext; but you will, perhaps, soon know on what account you have been in prison."

"Ah, indeed! I forgot to ask you—where are you taking me?"

"To the cardinal."

"What does he want with me?"

"I do not know. I did not even know that you were the person whom I was sent to fetch."

"Impossible! You—a favorite of the minister!"

"A favorite! no, indeed!" cried D'Artagnan. "Ah, my poor friend! I am just as poor a Gascon as when I saw you at Meung, twenty-two years ago, you know; alas!" and he concluded his speech with a deep sigh.

"Nevertheless, you come as one in authority."

"Because I happened to be in the antechamber when the cardinal called me, just by chance. I am still a lieutenant in the musketeers, and have been so these twenty years."

"Then no misfortune has happened to you."

"And what misfortune could happen to me? To quote some Latin verses which I have forgotten, or rather, never known well, 'the thunderbolt never falls on the valleys;' and I am a valley, dear Rochefort, and one of the lowest that can be."

"Then Mazarin is still Mazarin?"

"The same as ever, my friend; it is said that he is married to the queen?"

"Married?"

"If not her husband, he is unquestionably her lover."

"You surprise me; to resist Buckingham, and yield to Mazarin."

"Just like the women," replied D'Artagnan, coolly.

"Like women—but not like queens."

"Egad! queens are the weakest of their sex, when we come to such matters as these."

The count then made several minute inquiries after his friends. The Duc de Beaufort, was he still in prison? To this D'Artagnan answered in the affirmative.

"And," said the prisoner, "what talk is there of war with Spain?"

"With Spain—no," answered D'Artagnan; "but with Paris."

"What do you mean?" cried Rochefort.

"Do you hear the guns, pray? The citizens are amusing themselves in the meantime."

"And you—do you really think that anything could be done with these *bourgeois*?"

"Yes, they might do well, if they had any leader to unite them in one body."

"How miserable not to be free!"

"Don't be downcast. Since Mazarin has sent for you, it is because he wants you. I congratulate you! Many a long year has passed since any one has wanted to employ me; so you see in what a situation I am."

"Make your complaints known; that's my advice."

"Listen, Rochefort; let's make a compact. We are friends, are we not?"

"Egad! I bear the traces of our friendship—three cuts from your sword."

"Well, if you should be restored to favor, don't forget me."

"On the honor of a Rochefort; but you must do the like for me."

"There's my hand—I promise."

"Therefore, whenever you find an opportunity of saying something in my behalf——"

"I shall say it; and you?"

"I shall do the same."

"Apropos, are we to speak about your friends as well—Athos, Porthos, and Aramis? or have you forgotten them?"

"Almost!"

"What's become of them?"

"I don't know; we separated, as you know. They are alive, and that's all I can say about them. From time to time I hear of them indirectly, but in what part of the world they are, devil take me if I know. No, on my honor, I have not a friend in the world but you, Rochefort."

"And the illustrious—what's the name of the lad whom I made a sergeant in Piedmont's regiment?"

"Planchet?"

"The illustrious Planchet. What's become of him?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he is not at the head of the mob at this very moment. He married a woman who keeps a confectioner's shop in the Rue des Lombards; for he's a lad that was always fond of sweetmeats; he's now a citizen of Paris. You'll see that that queer fellow will be a sheriff before I shall be a captain."

"Come, dear D'Artagnan, look up a little—courage. It is

when one is lowest on the wheel of fortune, that the wheel turns round and raises us. This evening your destiny begins to change."

"Amen!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, stopping the carriage.

He got out, and remounted his steed, not wishing to arrive at the gate of the Palais Royal in the same carriage with the prisoner.

In a few minutes the party entered the courtyard, and D'Artagnan led the prisoner up the great staircase, and across the corridor and antechamber.

As they stopped at the door of the cardinal's study, D'Artagnan was about to be announced, when Rochefort slapped him on his shoulder.

"D'Artagnan, let me confess to you what I've been thinking about during the whole of my drive, as I looked out upon the parties of citizens who perpetually crossed our path, and looked at you and your four men, with their flambeaux."

"Speak out," answered D'Artagnan.

"I had only to cry out 'Help!' for you and your companions to be cut to pieces, and then I should have been free."

"Why didn't you do it?" asked the lieutenant.

"Come, then!" cried Rochefort. "We swore friendship! Ah! Had any one but you been there—I don't say——"

D'Artagnan bowed.

But the impatient voice of Mazarin summoned Rochefort to the room where the minister awaited him. "Tell Monsieur D'Artagnan to wait outside—I don't require him yet," said the cardinal.

Rochefort, rendered suspicious and cautious by these words, entered the apartment, where he found Mazarin sitting at the table, dressed in his ordinary garb, and as one of the prelates of the church, his costume being similar to that of the abbés in that day, excepting that his scarf and stockings were violet.

As the door was closed, Rochefort cast a glance toward Mazarin, which was answered by one, equally furtive, from the minister.

There was little change in the cardinal; still dressed with sedulous care, his hair well arranged and well curled, his person perfumed—he looked, owing to his extreme taste in dress, only half his age. But Rochefort, who had passed five years in prison, had become old in the lapse of years; the dark locks of this estimable friend of the defunct Cardinal de Richelieu were now white; the deep bronze of his complexion had been succeeded by a mortal paleness, which betokened

debility. As he gazed at him, Mazarin shook his head slightly, as much as to say, "This is a man who does not appear to me fit for much."

After a pause, which appeared an age to Rochefort, Mazarin, however, took from a bundle of papers a letter, and showing it to the count, he said:

"I find here a letter in which you sue for liberty, Monsieur de Rochefort. You are in prison, then?"

Rochefort trembled in every limb at this question. "But I thought," he said, "that your eminence knew that circumstance better than any one——"

"I? Oh no! There's a mass of prisoners in the Bastille who were sent there in the time of Monsieur de Richelieu—I don't even know their names."

"Yes, but in regard to myself, my lord, it cannot be so, for I was removed from the Chatelet to the Bastille owing to an order from your eminence."

"You think you were."

"I am certain of it."

"Ah, yes! I think I remember it. Did you not once refuse to undertake a journey to Brussels for the queen?"

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Rochefort. "There is the true reason! Idiot as I am, though I have been trying to find it out for five years, I never found it out."

"But I do not say that it was the cause of your imprisonment. I merely ask you, did you not refuse to go to Brussels for the queen, while you had consented to go there to do some service for the late cardinal?"

"That is the very reason that I refused to go back again to Brussels. I was there at a fearful moment. I was sent there to intercept a correspondence between Chalais and the archduke, and even then, when I was discovered, I was nearly torn to pieces. How could I then return to Brussels?"

"Well, then, since the best motives are liable to misconstruction, the queen saw in your refusal nothing but a refusal—a distinct refusal; she had also much to complain of you during the lifetime of the cardinal—yes, her majesty the queen——"

Rochefort smiled contemptuously.

"Since I was a faithful servant, my lord, to Cardinal Richelieu during his life, it stands to reason that now, after his death, I should serve you well, in defiance of the whole world."

"With regard to myself, Monsieur de Rochefort," replied Mazarin, "I am not like Monsieur de Richelieu, all-power

ful. I am but a minister, who wants no servants, being myself nothing but a servant of the queen's. Now, the queen is of a sensitive nature; hearing of your refusal to obey her, she looked upon it as a declaration of war; and as she considers you as a man of superior talent, and therefore dangerous, she desired me to make sure of you—that is the reason of your being shut up in the Bastille—but your release can be managed. You are one of those men who can comprehend certain matters: and have understood them, and can act with energy——”

“Such was Cardinal Richelieu's opinion, my lord.”

“The cardinal,” interrupted Mazarin, “was a great politician, and there was his vast superiority over me. I am a straightforward, simple man; that's my great disadvantage. I am of a frankness of character quite French.”

Rochefort bit his lips in order not to smile.

“Now to the point. I want friends. I want faithful servants. When I say I want, I mean the queen wants them. I do nothing without her commands; pray, understand that—not like Monsieur de Richelieu, who went on just as he pleased—so I shall never be a great man, as he was; but, to compensate for that, I shall be a good man, Monsieur de Rochefort, and I hope to prove it to you.”

Rochefort knew well the tones of that soft voice, in which there was sometimes a sort of gentle lisp, like the hissing of a viper.

“I am disposed to believe your eminence,” he replied; “but have the kindness not to forget that I have been five years in the Bastille, and that no way of viewing things is so false as through the grating of a prison.”

“Ah, Monsieur de Rochefort! have I not told you already that I had nothing to do with that. The queen—cannot you make allowances for the pettishness of a queen and a princess? But that has passed away as suddenly as it came, and is forgotten.”

“I can easily suppose, sir, that her majesty has forgotten it amid the fêtes and the courtiers of the Palais Royal, but I, who have passed those years in the Bastille——”

“Ah! *mon Dieu!* my dear Monsieur de Rochefort! do you absolutely think that the Palais Royal is the abode of gayety? No. We have had great annoyances there. As for me, I play my game fair and above board, as I always do. Let us come to some conclusion. Are you one of us, Monsieur de Rochefort?”

“I am very desirous of being so, my lord; but I am totally

in the dark about everything. In the Bastille one talks politics only with soldiers and gaolers, and you have not an idea, my lord, how little those sort of people really know of the state of affairs; I am of Monsieur de Bassompierre's party. Is he still one of the seventeen peers of France?"

"He is dead, sir—'tis a great loss. His devotion to the queen was great; and men of loyalty are scarce."

"I think so, forsooth," said Rochefort; "and when you find any of them you send them off to the Bastille. However, there are plenty of them in the world, but you don't look in the right direction for them, my lord."

"Indeed! explain to me. Ah! my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, how much you must have learned during your intimacy with the late cardinal! Ah! he was a great man!"

"Will your eminence be angry if I read you a lesson?"

"I! never! you know you may say anything to me. I try to be beloved, and not to be feared."

"Well, I myself, on the wall of my cell, scratched with a nail, a proverb, which says, 'Like master, like servant.'"

"Pray, what does that mean?"

"It means that Monsieur de Richelieu was able to find trusty servants—dozens and dozens of them."

"He! the point aimed at by every poignard! Richelieu, who passed his life in warding off blows which were forever aimed at him!"

"But he *did* ward them off," said De Rochefort, "and the reason was, that though he had bitter enemies he possessed also true friends. I have known persons," he continued—for he thought he might avail himself of the opportunity of speaking of D'Artagnan—"who, by their sagacity and address, have deceived the penetration of Cardinal Richelieu; who, by their valor, have got the better of his guards and his spies; persons without money, without support, without credit, yet who have preserved to the crowned head its crown, and made the cardinal ask for pardon."

"Ah," cried Mazarin, with his wonted grace, "could I but find such men!"

"My lord, there has stood for six years at your very door a man such as I describe, and during those six years he has been unappreciated and unemployed by you."

"Who is it?"

"It is Monsieur d'Artagnan, a Gascon, who has done all this, saved his queen, and made Monsieur de Richelieu confess, that in point of talent, address, and political skill, he was to him only a tyro."

"Tell me how it all happened."

"No, my lord, the secret is not mine; it is a secret which concerns the queen. In what he did, this man had three colleagues, three brave men, such men as you were wishing for just now."

"And were these four men attached to each other, true in heart, really united?"

"As if they had been one man, as if their four hearts had pulsated in one breast."

"You pique my curiosity, dear Rochefort; pray tell me the whole story."

"That is impossible; but I will tell you a true story, my lord."

"Pray do so—I delight in stories," cried the cardinal.

"Listen then," returned Rochefort, as he spoke endeavoring to read, in that subtle countenance, the cardinal's motive.

"Once upon a time there lived a queen—a powerful monarch—who reigned over one of the greatest kingdoms of the universe; and a minister; and this minister wished much to injure the queen, whom once he had loved too well. (Do not try, my lord, you cannot guess who it is; all this happened long before you came into the country where this queen reigned.) There came to the court an ambassador so brave, so magnificent, so elegant, that every woman lost her heart to him; and the queen had even the indiscretion to give him certain ornaments so rare that they could never be replaced by any like them.

"As these ornaments belonged to the king, the minister persuaded his majesty to insist upon the queen's appearing in them as part of her jewels, at a ball which was soon to take place. There is no occasion to tell you, my lord, that the minister knew for a fact that these ornaments had been sent after the ambassador, who was far away, beyond seas. This illustrious queen had fallen low as the least of her subjects—fallen from her high estate."

"Indeed!"

"Well, my lord, four men resolved to save her. These four men were not princes, neither were they dukes, neither were they men in power, they were not even rich men. They were four honest soldiers, each with a good heart, a good arm, and a sword at the service of those who wanted it. They set out. The minister knew of their departure, and had planted people on the road to prevent them ever reaching their destination. Three of them were overwhelmed and disabled by numerous assailants, one of them alone arrived at the port, hav-

ing either killed or wounded those who wished to stop him. He crossed the sea, and brought back the set of ornaments to the great queen, who was able to wear them on her shoulder on the appointed day, and this very nearly ruined the minister. What think you of that trait, my lord?"

"It is splendid," said Mazarin.

"Well, I know ten such men."

"And was Monsieur D'Artagnan one of these four men?" inquired the cardinal.

"It was he who conducted the enterprise."

"And who were the others?"

"I leave it to Monsieur d'Artagnan to name them, my lord."

"You suspect me, Monsieur de Rochefort; I want him, and you, and all to aid me."

"Begin by telling me why, my lord; for after five or six years of imprisonment, it is natural to feel some curiosity as to one's destination."

"You, my dear Monsieur de Rochefort, shall have the post of confidence; you shall go to Vincennes, where Monsieur de Beaufort is confined; you will guard him well for me."

"My lord," replied Rochefort, "to go out of the Bastille in order to go into Vincennes is only to change one's prison."

"Say at once that you are on the side of Monsieur de Beaufort—that will be the most sincere line of conduct," said Mazarin.

"My lord, I have been so long shut up, that I am only of one party—I am for fresh air. Employ me in any other way; employ me even actively—but let it be on the high roads."

"My dear Monsieur de Rochefort," Mazarin replied in a tone of raillery, "you think yourself still a young man—your spirit is still juvenile, but your strength fails you. Believe me, you ought now to take rest. Here!"

"You decide, then, nothing about me, my lord?"

"On the contrary, I have come to a decision about you." Bernouin came into the room.

"Call an officer of justice," he said, "and stay close to me," he added in a low tone.

The officer entered—Mazarin wrote a few words, which he gave to this man—then he bowed.

"Adieu, Monsieur de Rochefort," he said.

Rochefort bent low.

"I see, my lord, that I am to be taken back to the Pastille."

"You are sagacious."

"I shall return thither, my lord, but you are wrong not to employ me."

"You? the friend of my greatest foes? don't suppose that you are the only person who can serve me, Monsieur de Rochefort. I shall find many as able men as you are."

"I wish you may, my lord," replied De Rochefort.

He was then reconducted by the little staircase, instead of passing through the antechamber where D'Artagnan was waiting. In the courtyard the carriage and four musketeers were ready, but he looked around in vain for his friend.

"Ah!" he muttered to himself, "things are changed indeed;" yet he jumped into the carriage with the alacrity of a man of five-and-twenty.

CHAPTER IV.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA AT THE AGE OF FORTY-SIX.

WHEN left alone with Bernouin, Mazarin was, for some minutes, lost in thought. He had gained much information, but not enough.

"My lord, have you any commands?" asked Bernouin.

"Yes, yes," replied Mazarin. "Light me; I am going to the queen."

Bernouin took up a candlestick, and led the way.

There was a secret communication between the cardinal's apartments and those of the queen; and through this corridor* Mazarin passed whenever he wished to visit Anne of Austria.

In the bedroom in which this passage ended Bernouin encountered Madame de Beauvais, like himself entrusted with the secret of these subterranean love affairs; and Madame de Beauvais undertook to prepare Anne of Austria, who was in her oratory with the young king, Louis XIV., to receive the cardinal.

Anne, reclining in a large easy-chair, her head supported by her hand, her elbow resting on a table near her, was looking at her son, who was turning over the leaves of a book filled with pictures of battles. This celebrated woman fully understood the art of being dull with dignity. It was her practice to pass hours either in her oratory, or in her room, without either reading or praying.

When Madame de Beauvais appeared at the door, and an-

*This secret passage is still to be seen in the Palais Royal.

nounced the cardinal, the child, who had been engrossed in the pages of Quintus Curtius, enlivened as they were by engravings of Alexander's feats of arms, frowned, and looked at his mother—

"Why," he said, "does he enter without asking first for an audience?"

Anne colored slightly.

"The prime minister," she said, "is obliged, in these unsettled times, to inform the queen of all that is happening from time to time, without exciting the curiosity or remarks of the court."

"But Richelieu never came in, in this manner," said the pertinacious boy.

"How can you remember what Monsieur de Richelieu did? You were too young to know that."

"I do not remember what he did; but I have inquired, and I have been told all about it."

At this very moment Mazarin entered. The king rose immediately, took his book, closed it, and went to lay it down on the table, near which he continued standing, in order that Mazarin might be obliged to stand also.

Mazarin contemplated these proceedings with a thoughtful glance. They explained what had occurred that evening.

He bowed respectfully to the king, who gave him a somewhat cavalier reception, but a look from his mother reproved him for the hatred which, from his infancy, Louis XIV. had entertained toward Mazarin, and he endeavored to receive with a smile the minister's homage.

"It is time that the king should retire to rest," said the queen, speaking to Madame de Beauvais—for Anne was surprised at this early visit from Mazarin, who scarcely ever came into her apartments until every one had withdrawn for the night.

The queen had several times already told her son that he ought to go to bed; and, several times, Louis had coaxingly insisted on staying where he was; but now he made no reply, but turned pale, and bit his lips with anger.

In a few minutes Laporte came into the room. The child went directly to him without kissing his mother.

"Well, Louis," said Anne, "why do you not kiss me?"

"I thought you were angry with me, madame; you sent me away."

"I do not send you away; but you have had the smallpox, and I am afraid that sitting up late may tire you."

"You had no fears of my being tired when you ordered me

to go to the palace to-day to pass the odious decrees, which have raised up murmurs among the people."

"Sire!" interposed Laporte, in order to turn the subject—"to whom does your majesty wish me to give the candle?"

"To any one, Laporte," the child said; and then added, in a loud voice, "to any one but Mancini."

Now Mancini was a nephew of Mazarin's, and was as much hated by Louis as the cardinal himself, although placed near his person by the minister.

And the king went out of the room, without either embracing his mother, or even bowing to the cardinal.

"Good," said Mazarin. "I am glad to see that his majesty is brought up with a hatred of dissimulation."

The queen, however, asked, with some impatience, what important business had brought the cardinal there that evening.

Mazarin sank into a chair, with the deepest melancholy painted on his countenance.

"It is likely," he replied, "that we shall soon be obliged to separate, unless you love me well enough to follow me into Italy."

"Why," cried the queen; "how is that?"

"Because, as they say in the opera of *Thisbe*—'The whole world conspires to break our bonds.'"

"You jest, sir!" answered the queen, endeavoring to assume something of her former dignity.

"Alas! I do not, madame," rejoined Mazarin. "Mark well what I say. The whole world conspires to break our bonds. Now as you are one of the whole world, I mean to say that you also desert me."

"Cardinal!"

"Heavens! did I not see you the other day smile on the Duke of Orleans? or rather at what he said?"

"And what was he saying?"

"He said this, madame. 'Mazarin is a stumbling-block. Send him away, and all will be well.'"

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Oh, madame—you are the queen!"

"Queen, forsooth! when I am at the mercy of every scribbler in the Palais Royal, who covers waste paper with nonsense, or of every country squire in the kingdom."

"Nevertheless, you have still the power of banishing from your presence those whom you do not like!"

"That is to say, whom *you* do not like," returned the queen.

"I—persons whom I do not like!"

"Yes, indeed. Who sent away Madame de Chevreuse?"

"A woman of intrigue; who wanted to keep up against me the spirit of cabal which she had raised against M. de Richelieu."

"Then who dismissed Madame de Hautefort?"

"A prude; who told you every night, as she undressed you, that it was a sin to love a priest; just as if one were a priest because one happens to be a cardinal."

"Who ordered Monsieur de Beaufort to be arrested?"

"An incendiary; the burden of whose song was his intention to assassinate me. My enemies, madame ought to be yours, and your friends my friends."

"My friends, sir!" The queen shook her head. "Alas! I have none. In vain do I look about me for friends. I have no influence over any one. Monsieur* is led by his favorite to-day, Choisy; to-morrow it will be La Rivière, or some one else. The prince is led by Madame de Longueville, who is, in her turn, led by the Prince de Marsillac, her lover. Monsieur de Conti is under the influence of the deputy, who is the slave of Madame de Guemenée."

"Do you know Monsieur de Rochefort?" said Mazarin.

"One of my bitterest enemies—the faithful friend of Cardinal Richelieu."

"I know that, and we sent him to the Bastille," said Mazarin.

"Is he at liberty?" asked the queen.

"No; still there—but I only speak of him in order that I may introduce the name of another man. Do you know Monsieur d'Artagnan?" he added, looking steadfastly at the queen.

Anne of Austria received the blow with a beating heart.

"Has the Gascon been indiscreet?" she murmured; then said aloud:

"D'Artagnan! stop an instant; that name is certainly familiar to me. D'Artagnan! there was a musketeer who was in love with one of my women, poor young creature! she was poisoned on my account."

"That's all you know of him?" asked Mazarin.

The queen looked at him, surprised.

"You seem, sir," she remarked, "to be making me undergo a course of interrogations."

*The Duke of Orleans.

"Which you answer according to your own fancy," replied Mazarin.

"Tell me your wishes, and I will comply with them."

The queen spoke with some impatience.

"Well then, madame, not a day passes in which I do not suffer affronts from your princes and your lordly servants; every one of them automata who do not perceive that I hold the spring which makes them move, nor do they see that beneath my quiet demeanor there is the scoff of an injured and irritated man, who has sworn to himself to master them one of these days. We have arrested Monsieur de Beaufort, but he is the least dangerous among them. There is the Prince de Condé——"

"The hero of Rocroy! do you think of *him*?"

"Yes, madame, often and often; but *pazienza*, as we say in Italy. Next, after Monsieur de Condé, comes the Duke of Orleans."

"What are you saying? The first prince of the blood—the king's uncle!"

"No! not the first prince of the blood, not the king's uncle, but the base conspirator, the soul of every cabal, who pretends to lead the brave people who are weak enough to believe in the honor of a prince of the blood—not the prince nearest to the throne, not the king's uncle, I repeat, but the murderer of Chalais, of Montmorency, and of Cinq-Mars, who is playing now the same game that he played long ago, and who fancies he shall gain an advantage; instead of having an opponent who frowns, he has one before him, face to face, who smiles. But he is mistaken. I shall not leave so near the queen that source of discord with which the deceased cardinal so often caused the anger of the king to boil over."

Anne blushed, and buried her head in her hands.

"What am I to do?" she said, bowed down beneath the voice of her tyrant.

"Endeavor to remember the names of those faithful servants who crossed the channel, in spite of Monsieur de Richelieu—tracking the roads along which they passed by their blood—to bring back to your majesty certain jewels given by her to Buckingham."

Anne arose, full of majesty, and, as if touched by a spring, started up, and looking at the cardinal with the haughty dignity which, in the days of her youth, had made her so powerful, "You insult me, sir," she said.

"I wish," continued Mazarin, finishing, as it were, the

speech which this sudden movement of the queen had cut short; "I wish, in fact, that you should now do for your husband what you formerly did for your lover."

"Again, that accusation?" cried the queen; "I thought that calumny was stifled or extinct. You have spared me till now; but since you speak of it, once for all I tell you——"

"Madame, what I wish is, to know all," said Mazarin, astounded by this returning courage.

"I will tell you all," replied Anne. "Listen: there were, in truth, at that epoch, four devoted hearts, four loyal spirits, four faithful swords who saved more than my life—my honor——"

"Ah! you confess it," exclaimed Mazarin.

"Is it only the guilty whose honor is at the sport of others, sir; and cannot women be dishonored by appearances? However, I swear I was not guilty; I swear it by——"

The queen looked around her for some sacred object by which she could swear; and taking out of a cupboard, hidden in the tapestry, a small coffer of rosewood, set in silver, and laying it on the altar—

"I swear," she said, "by these sacred relics that Buckingham was not my lover."

"What relics are those by which you swear?" asked Mazarin, smiling. "I am incredulous."

The queen untied from around her throat a small golden key which hung there, and presented it to the cardinal.

"Open," she said, "sir, and look for yourself."

Mazarin opened the coffer; a knife, covered with rust, and two letters, one of which was stained with blood, alone met his gaze.

"What are these things?" he asked.

"What are these things?" replied Anne, with queen-like dignity, and extending toward the open coffer an arm, despite the lapse of years, still beautiful. "These two letters are the only letters that I ever wrote to him. That knife is the knife with which Felton stabbed him. Read the letters, and see if I have lied, or spoken the truth."

But Mazarin, notwithstanding this permission, instead of reading the letters, took the knife which the dying Buckingham had snatched out of the wound, and sent by Laporte to the queen. The blade was red, for the blood had become rust; after a momentary examination, during which the queen became as white as the cloth which covered the altar on which she was leaning, he put it back into the coffer with an involuntary shudder.

"It is well, madame; I believe your oath."

"No, no, read," exclaimed the queen indignantly; "read, I command you, for I am resolved that everything shall be finished to-night, and never will I recur to this subject again. Do you think," she said, with a ghastly smile, "that I shall be inclined to reopen this coffer to answer any future accusations?"

Mazarin, overcome by this determination, read the two letters. In one the queen asked for the ornaments back again. This letter had been conveyed by D'Artagnan, and had arrived in time. The other was that which Laporte had placed in the hands of the Duke of Buckingham, warning him that he was about to be assassinated; this had arrived too late.

"It is well, madame," said Mazarin; "nothing can be said to this testimony."

"Sir," replied the queen, closing the coffer, and leaning her hand upon it, "if there is anything to be said, it is that I have always been ungrateful to the brave men who saved me—that I have given nothing to that gallant officer, D'Artagnan, you were speaking of just now, but my hand to kiss, and this diamond."

As she spoke she extended her beautiful hand to the cardinal, and showed him a superb diamond which sparkled on her finger.

"It appears," she resumed, "that he sold it—he sold it in order to save me another time—to be able to send a messenger to the duke to warn him of his danger—he sold it to Monsieur Dessessarts, on whose finger I remarked it. I bought it from him, but it belongs to D'Artagnan. Give it back to him, sir; and since you have such a man in your service, make him useful."

"And now," added the queen, her voice broken by her emotion, "have you any other question to ask me?"

"Nothing"—the cardinal spoke in the most conciliatory manner—"except to beg of you to forgive my unworthy suspicions. I love you so tenderly that I cannot help being jealous—even of the past."

A smile, which was indefinable, passed over the lips of the queen.

"Since you have no further interrogations to make, leave me, I beseech you," she said. "I wish, after such a scene, to be alone."

Mazarin bent low before her.

"I shall retire, madame; do you permit me to return?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

The cardinal took the queen's hand, and pressed it, with an air of gallantry, to his lips.

Scarcely had he left her than the queen went into her son's room, and inquired from Laporte if the king was in bed. Laporte pointed to the child, who was asleep.

Anne ascended the steps aside of the bed, and kissed softly the placid forehead of her son; then she retired as silently as she came, merely saying to Laporte:

"Try, my dear Laporte, to make the king more courteous to Monsieur le Cardinal, to whom both he and I are under such great obligations."

CHAPTER V.

THE GASCON AND THE ITALIAN.

MEANWHILE the cardinal returned to his own room; and after asking Bernouin, who stood at the door, whether anything had occurred during his absence, and being answered in the negative, he desired that he might be left alone.

When he was alone, he opened the door of the corridor, and then that of the antechamber. There D'Artagnan was asleep upon a bench.

The cardinal went up to him, and touched his shoulder. D'Artagnan started, awakened himself, and, as he awoke, stood up exactly like a soldier under arms.

"Monsieur D'Artagnan," said the cardinal, sitting down on a *fauteuil*, "you have always seemed to me to be a brave and an honorable man."

"Possibly," thought D'Artagnan; "but he has taken a long time to let me know his thoughts;" nevertheless he bent down to the very ground in gratitude for Mazarin's compliment.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," continued Mazarin, "you have performed sundry exploits in the last reign."

"Your eminence is too good to remember that. It is true I fought with tolerable success."

"I don't speak of your warlike exploits, monsieur," said Mazarin; "although they gained you much reputation, they were surpassed by others."

D'Artagnan pretended astonishment.

"Well, you do not reply?" resumed Mazarin.

"I am waiting, my lord, till you tell me of what exploits you speak."

"I speak of certain adventures. I speak of the adventure referring to the queen—of the ornaments, of the journey you made with three of your friends."

"Ha, ho-o!" thought the Gascon; "is this a snare, or not? Let me be on my guard."

And he assumed a look of stupidity which Mendori or Bellerose, two of the first actors of the day, might have envied him.

"Bravo," cried Mazarin; "they told me that you were the man I wanted. Come, let us see what you will do for me!"

"Everything that your eminence may please to command me," was the reply.

"You will do for me what you have done for the queen?"

"Certainly," D'Artagnan said to himself, "he wishes to make me speak out. He's not more cunning than De Richelieu was! Devil take him!" Then he said aloud:

"The queen, my lord! I don't comprehend."

"You don't comprehend that I want you and your three friends to be of use to me?"

"What friends, my lord?"

"Your three friends—the friends of former days."

"Of former days, my lord! In former days I had not only three friends, I had fifty—at twenty, one calls every one one's friend."

"Well, sir," returned Mazarin; "prudence is a fine thing, but to-day you might regret having been too prudent."

"My lord, Pythagoras made his disciples keep silence for five years, that they might learn to hold their tongues."

"But you have been silent for twenty years, sir. Speak, now, for the queen herself releases you from your promise."

"The queen!"

"Yes, the queen! And as a proof of what I say she commanded me to show you this diamond, which she thinks you know."

And so saying, Mazarin extended his hand to the officer, who sighed as he recognized the ring which had been given to him by the queen on the night of the ball at the Hotel de Ville.

"'Tis true. I remember well that diamond."

"You see, then, that I speak to you in the queen's name. Answer me without acting as if you were on the stage—your interests are concerned in your doing so. Where are your friends?"

"I do not know, my lord. We have parted company this long time; all three have left the service."

"Where can you find them, then?"

"Wherever they are, that's my business."

"Well, now what are your conditions if I employ you?"

"Money, my lord; as much money as what you wish me to undertake will require."

"The devil he does! Money! and a large sum!" said Mazarin. "Pray are you aware that the king has no money now in his treasury?"

"Do then as I did, my lord. Sell the crown diamonds. Trust me, don't let us try to do things cheaply. Great undertakings are badly done with small means."

"Well," returned Mazarin, "we will satisfy you."

"Richelieu," thought D'Artagnan, would have given me five hundred pistoles in advance."

"You will then be at my service?" asked Mazarin.

"And what are we to do?"

"Make your mind easy; when the time for action comes, you shall be in full possession of what I require from you; wait till that time arrives, and find out your friends."

"My lord, possibly they are not in Paris. I must, perhaps, make a long journey to find them out. Traveling is dear, and I am only a poor lieutenant in the musketeers; besides, I have been in the service for twenty-two years, and have accumulated nothing but debts."

Mazarin remained some moments in deep thought, as if he combated with himself; then, going to a large cupboard closed with a triple lock, he took from it a bag of silver, and weighing it twice in his hands before he gave it to D'Artagnan—

"Take this," he said, with a sigh, "'tis for your journey."

D'Artagnan bowed, and plunged the bag into the depth of an immense pocket.

"Well, then, all is settled; you are to set off," said the cardinal.

"Yes, my lord."

"Apropos, what are the names of your friends?"

"The Count de la Fère, formerly styled Athos; Monsieur du Valon, whom we used to call Porthos; the Chevalier d'Herblay—now the Abbé d'Herblay—whom we used to call Aramis——"

The cardinal smiled.

"Younger sons," he said, "who enlisted in the musketeers under feigned names in order not to lower their family names. Long rapiers, but light purses, you know."

"If, God willing, these rapiers should be devoted to the service of your eminence," said D'Artagnan, "I shall venture

to express a wish—which is, that in its turn, the purse of your eminence may become light, and theirs heavy—for with these three men, your eminence may rouse all Europe, if you like.”

“These Gascons,” said the cardinal, laughing, “almost beat the Italians in effrontery.”

“At all events,” answered D’Artagnan, with a smile similar to the cardinal’s, “they beat them when they draw their swords.”

He then withdrew, and as he passed into the courtyard he stopped near a lamp, and dived eagerly into the bag of money.

“Crown pieces only, silver pieces! I suspected it. Ah, Mazarin! Mazarin! thou hast no confidence in me! so much the worse for thee—harm may come of it!”

Meanwhile the cardinal was rubbing his hands in great satisfaction.

“A hundred pistoles! a hundred pistoles! for a hundred pistoles I have discovered a secret for which Richelieu would have paid a thousand crowns: without reckoning the value of that diamond”—he cast a complacent look at the ring, which he had kept, instead of restoring it to D’Artagnan—“which is worth, at least, ten thousand francs.”

He returned to his room, and, after depositing the ring in a casket filled with brilliants of every sort—for the cardinal was a connoisseur in precious stones—he called to Bernouin to undress him, regardless of the noises, or of the firing of guns which continued to resound through Paris, although it was now nearly midnight.

CHAPTER VI.

D’ARTAGNAN IN HIS FORTIETH YEAR.

YEARS have elapsed, many events have happened, alas! since, in our romance of “The Three Guardsmen,” we took leave of D’Artagnan, at No. 12 Rue des Fossoyeurs. D’Artagnan had not failed in his career, but circumstances had been adverse to him. So long as he was surrounded by his friends, he retained his youth and the poetry of his character. His was one of those fine, ingenuous natures which assimilate themselves easily to the dispositions of others. Athos imparted to him his greatness of soul; Porthos, his enthu-

siasm; Aramis, his elegance. Had D'Artagnan continued his intimacy with these three men, he would have become a superior character. Athos was the first to leave him, in order that he might retire to a small property which he had inherited near Blois. Porthos, the second, to marry an attorney's wife; and lastly, Aramis, the third, to take orders, and become an abbé. From that day D'Artagnan felt lonely and powerless, without courage to pursue a career in which he could only distinguish himself on condition that each of his three companions should endow him with one of the gifts which each had received from heaven.

Notwithstanding his commission in the musketeers, D'Artagnan felt completely solitary. For a time the delightful remembrance of Madame Bonacieux left on his character a certain poetic tinge, perishable, and, like all other recollections in this world, these impressions were, by degrees, effaced. A garrison life is fatal even to the most aristocratic organizations; and, imperceptibly, D'Artagnan, always in the camp, always on horseback, always in garrison, became (I know not how in the present age one would express it) a complete trooper. His early refinement of character was not only not lost, but was even greater than ever; but it was now applied to the little instead of to the great things of life—to the material condition of the soldier—comprised under the heads of a good lodging, a good table, a good hostess. These important advantages D'Artagnan found to his own taste in the Rue Tiquetonne, at the sign of the Roe, where a pretty Flemish woman, named Madeleine, presided.

In the evening, after his conversation with Mazarin, he returned to his lodgings, absorbed in reflection. His mind was full of the fine diamond which he had once called his own, and which he had seen on the minister's finger that night.

"Should that diamond ever fall into my hands again," such was his reflection, "I should turn it at once into money; I should buy, with the proceeds, certain lands around my father's chateau, which is a pretty place—well enough—but with no land to it at all, except a garden about the size of the Cemetery des Innocents; and I should wait, in all my glory, till some rich heiress, attracted by my good looks, chose to marry me. Then I should like to have three sons; I should make the first a nobleman, like Athos; the second a good soldier, like Porthos; the third an excellent abbé, like Aramis. Faith! that would be a far better life than I lead now; but Monsieur Mazarin is a mean wretch, who won't dispossess himself of his diamond in my favor."

On entering the Rue Tiquetonne he heard a tremendous noise, and found a dense crowd near the house.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "is the hotel on fire?" On approaching the hotel of the Roe, he found, however, that it was in front of the next house that the mob was collected. The people were shouting, and running about with torches. By the light of one of these torches, D'Artagnan perceived men in uniform.

He asked what was going on.

He was told that twenty citizens, headed by one man, had attacked a carriage, which was escorted by a troop of the cardinal's bodyguard; but, a reinforcement having come up, the assailants had been put to flight, and the leader had taken refuge in the hotel, next to his lodgings; the house was now being searched.

In his youth, D'Artagnan had often headed the *bourgeoisie* against the military, but he was cured of all those hot-headed propensities; besides, he had the cardinal's hundred pistoles in his pocket: so he went into the hotel without saying a word; he found Madeleine alarmed for his safety, and anxious to tell him all the events of the evening, but he cut her short by ordering her to put his supper in his room, and to give him with it a bottle of good Burgundy.

He took his key and his candle, and went upstairs to his bedroom. He had been contented, for the convenience of the house, to lodge on the fourth story; and truth obliges us even to confess that his chamber was just above the gutter and below the roof. His first care on entering it was to lock up in an old bureau with a new lock his bag of money, and then as soon as supper was ready, he sent away the waiter who brought it up, and sat down to table.

Not to reflect on what had passed, as one might fancy. No—D'Artagnan considered that things are never well done when they are not reserved to their proper time. He was hungry; he supped, he went to bed. Neither was he one of those who think that the silence of the night brings good counsel with it. In the night he slept, but in the morning, refreshed and calm, he was inspired with the clearest views of everything. It was long since he had had any reason for his morning's inspiration, but he had always slept all night long. At daybreak he awoke, and made a turn round his room.

"In '43," he said, "just before the death of the late cardinal, I received a letter from Athos. Where was I then? Let me see. Oh! at the siege of Besançon! I was in the trenches. He told me—let me think—what was it? That he was living

on a small estate—but where? I was just reading the name of the place when the wind blew my letter away—I suppose to the Spaniards; there's no use in thinking any more about Athos. Let me see—with regard to Porthos, I received a letter from him, too. He invited me to a hunting party on his property in the month of September, 1646. Unluckily, as I was then in Bearn, on account of my father's death, the letter followed me there. I had left Bearn when it arrived, and I never received it until the month of April, 1647; and as the invitation was for September, 1646, I couldn't accept it. Let me look for this letter; it must be with my title-deeds."

D'Artagnan opened an old casket, which stood in a corner of the room, and which was full of parchments, referring to an estate, during a period of two hundred years lost to his family. He uttered an exclamation of delight, for the large handwriting of Porthos was discernible, and beneath it some lines traced by his worthy spouse.

D'Artagnan eagerly searched for the date of this letter; it was dated from the Château du Vallon.

Porthos had forgotten that any other address was necessary; in his pride he fancied that every one must know the Château du Vallon.

"Devil take the vain fellow," said D'Artagnan. "However, I had better find him out first, since he can't want money. Athos must have become an idiot by this time from drinking. Aramis must be absorbed in his devotional exercises."

He cast his eyes again on the letter. There was a postscript.

"I write by the same courier to our worthy friend Aramis in his convent."

"In his convent! what convent? There are about two hundred in Paris, and three thousand in France; and then, perhaps, on entering the convent he has changed his name. Ah! if I were but learned in theology, I should recollect what it was he used to dispute about with the curate of Montdidier and the superior of the Jesuits, when we were at Crevecœur; I should know what doctrine he leans to, and I should glean from that what saint he has adopted as his patron.

"Well, suppose I go back to the cardinal and ask him for a passport into all the convents one can find; even into the nunneries? It would be a curious idea, and maybe I should find my friend under the name of Achilles. But, no! I should lose myself in the cardinal's opinion. Great people only thank you for doing for them what's impossible;

what's possible, they say, they can do themselves, and they are right."

So he was perfectly ignorant either where to find Aramis any more than Porthos, and the affair was becoming a matter of great perplexity, when he fancied he heard a pane of glass break in his room window. He thought directly of his bag, and rushed from the inner room where he was sleeping. He was not mistaken; as he entered his bedroom, a man was getting in by the window.

"Ah! you scoundrel!" cried D'Artagnan, taking the man for a thief, and seizing his sword.

"Sir," cried the man. "In the name of heaven put your sword back into the sheath, and don't kill me unheard. I'm no thief, but an honest citizen, well off in the world, with a house of my own. My name is—ah! but surely you are Monsieur D'Artagnan?"

"And thou—Planchet!" cried the lieutenant.

"At your service, sir," said Planchet, overwhelmed with joy, "and I'm still capable of serving you."

"Perhaps so," replied D'Artagnan. "But why the devil dost thou run about the tops of houses at seven o'clock of the morning in the month of January?"

"Sir," said Planchet, "you must know; but, perhaps, you ought not to know——"

"Tell us what," returned D'Artagnan, "but first put a napkin against the window and draw the curtains."

"Sir," said the prudent Planchet, "in particular, are you on good terms with Monsieur de Rochefort?"

"Perfectly; one of my dearest friends."

"Ah! so much the better!"

"But what has De Rochefort to do with this manner you have of invading my room?"

"Ah, sir! I must tell you that Monsieur de Rochefort is——"

Planchet hesitated.

"Egad, I know where he is," said D'Artagnan. "He's in the Bastille!"

"That is to say, he was there," replied Planchet. "But in returning thither last night, when fortunately you did not accompany him, as his carriage was crossing the Rue de la Ferronnerie, his guards insulted the people, who began to abuse them. The prisoner thought this a good opportunity for escape; he called out his name, and cried for help. I was there. I heard the name of Rochefort. I remembered him well. I said in a loud voice that he was a prisoner, a friend

of the Duc de Beaufort, who called for help. The people were infuriated; they stopped the horses, and cut the escort to pieces, while I opened the doors of the carriage, and Monsieur de Rochefort jumped out and was lost among the crowd. At this moment a patrol passed by. I was obliged to sound a retreat toward the Rue Tiquetonne; I was pursued, and took refuge in a house next to this, where I have been concealed till this morning on the top of the house, between two mattresses. I ventured to run along the gutters, and——”

“Well,” interrupted D’Artagnan, “I am delighted that De Rochefort is free; but as for thee, if thou shouldst fall into the hands of the king’s servants, they will hang thee without mercy. Nevertheless, I promise thee thou shalt be hidden here, though I risk by concealing thee neither more nor less than my lieutenancy, if it was found out that I gave a rebel an asylum.”

“Ah! sir, you know well I would risk my life for you.”

“Thou mayest add that thou hast risked it, Planchet. I have not forgotten all I owe thee. Sit down there, and eat in security. I see thee cast expressive glances at the remains of my supper.”

“Yes, sir; for all I’ve had since yesterday was a slice of bread and butter, with preserve on it. Although I don’t despise sweet things in proper time and place, yet I found that supper rather light.”

“Poor fellow!” said D’Artagnan. “Well, come; set to.”

“Ah, sir! you are going to save my life a second time,” cried Planchet.

And he seated himself at the table, and ate as he did in the merry days of the Rue des Fossoyeurs, while D’Artagnan walked to and fro, and thought how he could make use of Planchet under present circumstances. While he turned this over in his mind, Planchet did his best to make up for lost time at table.

At last he uttered a cry of satisfaction, and paused, as if he had partially appeased his hunger.

“Come,” said D’Artagnan, who thought that it was now a convenient time to begin his interrogations, “dost thou know where Athos is?”

“No, sir,” replied Planchet.

“The devil thou dost not! Dost know where Porthos is?”

“No—not at all.”

“And Aramis?”

“Not in the least.”

“The devil! the devil! the devil!”

"But, sir," said Planchet, with a look of surprise, "I know where Bazin is."

"Where is he?"

"At Nôtre Dame."

"What has he to do at Nôtre Dame?"

"He is bedell."

"Bazin bedell at Nôtre Dame! He must know where his master is!"

"Without doubt he must."

D'Artagnan thought for a moment, then took his sword, and put on his cloak ready to go out.

"Sir," said Planchet, in a mournful tone, "do you abandon me thus to my fate! Think, if I am found out here, the people of the house, who have not seen me enter it, must take me for a thief."

"True," said D'Artagnan. "Let's see. Canst thou speak any patois?"

"I can do something better than that, sir; I can speak Flemish."

"Where the devil didst thou learn it?"

"In Artois, where I fought for two years. Listen, sir. Gooden morgen, mynheer, ith ben begeeray le weeten the go sond heets omstand."

"Which means?"

"Good-day, sir! I am anxious to know the state of your health."

"He calls that knowing a language! but, never mind, that will do capitally."

D'Artagnan opened the door, and called out to a waiter to desire Madeleine to come upstairs.

When the landlady made her appearance, she expressed much astonishment at seeing Planchet.

"My dear landlady," said D'Artagnan, "I beg to introduce to you your brother, who is arrived from Flanders, and whom I am going to take into my service."

"My brother?"

"Wish your sister good-morning, Master Peter."

"Wilkom, suster," said Planchet.

"Goeden day, brother," replied the astonished landlady.

"This is the case," said D'Artagnan: "this is your brother, Madeleine; you don't know him, perhaps, but I know him; he has arrived from Amsterdam. You must dress him up during my absence. When I return, which will be in about an hour, you must offer him to me as a servant, and, upon your recommendation, though he doesn't speak a word of French, I take him into my service. You understand?"

"That is to say, I guess your wishes; and that is all that's necessary," said Madeleine.

"You are a precious creature, my pretty hostess, and I'm obliged to you."

The next moment D'Artagnan was on his way to Nôtre Dame.

CHAPTER VII.

TOUCHES UPON THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS WHICH HALF A PIS-TOLE MAY PRODUCE UPON A BEDELL AND A CHORISTER.

D'ARTAGNAN, as he passed the Pont Neuf, congratulated himself upon having found Planchet again; for at that time an intelligent servant was essential to him; nor was he sorry that through Planchet, and the situation which he held in the Rue des Lombards, a connection with the *bourgeoisie* might be commenced, at that critical period when that class were preparing to make war with the court party. It was like having a spy in the enemy's camp. In this frame of mind, grateful for the accidental meeting with Planchet, pleased with himself, D'Artagnan reached Nôtre Dame. He ran up the steps, entered the church, and addressing a verger who was sweeping the chapel, asked him if he knew Monsieur Bazin.

"Monsieur Bazin, the bedell," said the verger. "Yes; there he is, attending mass, in the chapel of the Virgin."

D'Artagnan nearly jumped for joy—he had despaired of finding Bazin; but now, he thought, since he held one of the threads, he should be pretty sure to reach the other end of the clue.

He knelt down just opposite to the chapel, in order not to lose sight of his man; and as he had almost forgotten his prayers, and had omitted to take a book with him, he made use of his time in gazing at Bazin.

Bazin wore his dress, it may be observed, with equal dignity and saintly propriety. It was not difficult to understand that he had gained the summit of his ambition, and that the silver-mounted wand which he brandished was, in his eyes, as honorable a distinction as the marshal's baton, which Condé threw, or did not throw, into the enemy's line of battle at Fribourg. His person had undergone a change, analogous to the change in his dress; his figure was rounded, and, as it were, canonized. The striking points of his face were effaced; he had still a nose; but his cheeks, fattened out, each took off a portion of

it into themselves; his chin was joined to his throat; his eyes were swelled up with the puffiness of his cheeks; his hair, cut straight in holy guise, covered his forehead as far as his eyebrows.

The officiating priest was just finishing the mass, while D'Artagnan was looking at Bazin; he pronounced the words of the holy sacrament, and retired, giving the benediction, which was received by the kneeling communicants, to the astonishment of D'Artagnan, who recognized in the priest the coadjutor* himself, the famous Jean François Goneli, who at that time, having a presentiment of the part he was to play, was beginning to court popularity by almsgiving. It was to this end that he performed from time to time some of those early masses which the common people generally alone attended.

D'Artagnan knelt as well as the rest, received his share of the benediction, and made the sign of the cross; but when Bazin passed in his turn, with his eyes raised to heaven, and walking, in all humility, the very last, D'Artagnan pulled him by the hem of his robe.

Bazin looked down and started as if he had been a serpent.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" he cried; "*Vade retrā, Satanas!*"

"So, my dear Bazin," said the officer, laughing, "this is the way you receive an old friend."

"Sir," replied Bazin, "the true friends of a Christian are those who aid him in working out his salvation; not those who hinder him in so doing."

"I don't understand you, Bazin; nor can I see how I can be a stumbling-block in the way of your salvation," said D'Artagnan.

"You forget, sir, that you very nearly ruined forever that of my master; and that it was owing to you that he was very nearly being damned eternally for remaining a musketeer, while his true vocation was for the church."

"My dear Bazin, you ought to perceive," said D'Artagnan, "from the place in which you find me, that I am much changed in everything. Age produces good sense, and, as I doubt not but that your master is on the road to salvation, I want you to tell me where he is, that he may help me to mine."

"Rather say—to take him back with you into the world. Fortunately, I don't know where he is."

* A sacerdotal office.

"How!" cried D'Artagnan; "you don't know where Aramis is?"

"Formerly," replied Bazin, "Aramis was his name of perdition. By Aramis is meant Simara, which is the name of a demon. Happily for him, he has ceased to bear that name."

D'Artagnan saw clearly that he should get nothing out of this man, who was evidently telling a falsehood in his pretended ignorance of the abode of Aramis, but whose falsehoods were bold and decided.

"Well, Bazin," said D'Artagnan, "since you do not know where your master lives, let us speak of it no more; let us part good friends. Accept this half-pistole to drink to my health."

"I do not drink"—Bazin pushed away with dignity the officer's hand—" 'tis good only for the laity."

"Incorruptible!" murmured D'Artagnan; "I am unlucky;" and while he was lost in thought, Bazin retreated toward the sacristy, where he was only, as he thought, secure by shutting the door and closing himself in.

D'Artagnan was still in deep thought, when some one touched him on the shoulder. He turned, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"You here, Rochefort?" he said in a low voice.

"Hush!" returned Rochefort. "Do you know that I am at liberty?"

"I knew it from the fountain-head—from Planchet. And what brought you here?"

"I came to thank God for my happy deliverance," said Rochefort.

"And nothing more? I suppose that is not all."

"To take my orders from the coadjutor, and to see if we cannot plague Mazarin a little."

"A bad plan; you'll be shut up again in the Bastille."

"Oh, as to that, I shall take care, I assure you. The air, the fresh free air, is so good; besides"—and Rochefort drew a deep breath as he spoke—"I am going into the country to make a tour."

"Stop," cried D'Artagnan; "I, too, am going."

"And if I may, without impertinence, ask—where are you going?"

"To seek my friends. To find out Athos, Porthos, and Aramis."

"And when do you set out?"

"I am now on my road."

"Good luck to you."

"And to you—a good journey."

"Perhaps we shall meet on our road. Adieu! till we meet again! Apropos, should Mazarin speak to you about me, tell him that I have requested you to acquaint him that in a short time he will see whether I am, as he says, too old for action."

And Rochefort went away with one of those diabolical smiles which used formerly to make D'Artagnan shudder, but D'Artagnan could now see it without anguish, and smiling in his turn, with an expression of melancholy, which the recollections called up by that smile, could, perhaps, alone give to his countenance, he said:

"Go, demon, do what thou wilt! it matters little to me. There is not a second Constance in the world."

On his return to the cathedral, D'Artagnan saw Bazin, who was conversing with the sacristan. Bazin was making with his spare, little, short arms, ridiculous gestures. D'Artagnan perceived that he was enforcing prudence with respect to himself.

D'Artagnan slipped out of the cathedral, and placed himself in ambuscade at the corner of the Rue des Canettes; it was impossible that Bazin could go out of the cathedral without his seeing him.

In five minutes Bazin made his appearance, looking in every direction to see if he were observed, but he saw no one. Tranquilized by appearances, he ventured to walk on through the Rue Notre Dame. Then D'Artagnan rushed out of his hiding-place, and arrived in time to see Bazin turn down the Rue de la Juiverie, and enter, in the Rue de la Calandre, a respectable-looking house; and this D'Artagnan felt no doubt was the habitation of the worthy bedell. Afraid of making any inquiries at this house, D'Artagnan entered a small tavern at the corner of the street, and asked for a cup of hypocras. This beverage required a good half-hour to prepare it, and D'Artagnan had time, therefore, to watch Bazin unsuspected.

He perceived in the tavern a pert boy between twelve and fifteen years of age, whom he fancied he had seen not twenty minutes before, under the guise of a chorister. He questioned him; and as the boy had no interest in deceiving, D'Artagnan learned that he exercised from six o'clock in the morning until nine, the office of chorister; and from nine o'clock till midnight that of a waiter in the tavern.

While he was talking to this lad, a horse was brought to the

door of Bazin's house. It was saddled and bridled. Almost immediately Bazin came downstairs.

"Look!" said the boy, "there's our bedell, who is going a journey."

"And where is he going?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Forsooth, I don't know."

"Half a pistole if you can find out," said D'Artagnan.

"For me?" cried the child, his eyes sparkling with joy, "if I can find out where Bazin is going? 'Tis not difficult. You are not joking—are you?"

"No, on the honor of an officer; there is the half pistole;" and he showed him the seductive coin, but did not give it him.

"I shall ask him."

"Just the very way not to know. Wait till he is set out, and then, marry, come up—ask, and find out. The half pistole is ready; and he put it back again into his pocket.

"I understand," said the child, with that jeering smile which marks especially the "gamin de Paris." "Well, we must wait."

They had not long to wait. Five minutes afterward Bazin set off on a full trot, urging on his horse by the blows of a paraphine, which he was in the habit of using instead of a riding-whip.

Scarcely had he turned the corner of the Rue de la Juiverie, than the boy rushed after him like a bloodhound on full scent.

Before five minutes had elapsed the child returned.

"Well!" said D'Artagnan.

"Well!" answered the boy; "the thing is done."

"Where is he gone?"

"The half pistole is for me?"

"Doubtless; answer me."

"I want to see it. Give it me, that I may see that it is not false."

"There it is."

The child put the piece of money into his pocket.

"And now, where is he gone?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"He is gone to Noisy."

"How dost thou know?"

"Ah, faith! there was no great cunning necessary. I knew the horse which he rode; it belonged to the butcher, who lets it out now and then to M. Bazin. Now, I thought as much that the butcher would not let his horse out like that without knowing where it went to. And he answered, 'that Monsieur

Bazin went to Noisy. 'Tis his custom. He goes two or three times a-week."

"Dost thou know Noisy well?"

"I think so, truly; my nurse lives there."

"Is there a convent at Noisy?"

"Isn't there a grand one—a convent of Jesuits."

"What's thy name?"

"Friquet."

D'Artagnan wrote down the child's name in his tablets.

"Please, sir," said the boy, "do you think I can get any more half-pistoles any way?"

"Perhaps," replied D'Artagnan.

And, having got out all he wanted, he paid for the hypocras, which he did not drink, and went quickly back to the Rue Tiquetonne.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN, ON GOING TO A DISTANCE TO FIND OUT ARAMIS, DISCOVERS THAT HIS FRIEND WAS RIDING BEHIND PLANCHET.

THE plan adopted by D'Artagnan was soon perfected. He resolved not to reach Noisy in the day, for fear of being recognized: he had therefore plenty of time before him, for Noisy is only three or four leagues from Paris, on the road to Meaux.

He began his day by breakfasting very substantially—a bad beginning when one wants to employ the head, but an excellent precaution when one wants to work the body; and about two o'clock he had his two horses saddled, and followed by Planchet, he quitted Paris by the Barrière de la Villette.

At about a league and a half from the city, D'Artagnan, finding that in his impatience he had set out too soon, stopped to give the horses breathing time. The inn was full of disreputable-looking people, who seemed as if they were on the point of commencing some nightly expedition. A man, wrapped in a cloak, appeared at the door; but seeing a stranger, he beckoned to his companions, and two men who were drinking in the inn went out to speak to him.

D'Artagnan, on his side, went up to the landlady—praised her wine—which was a horrible production from the country of Montreuil—and heard from her that there were only two

houses of importance in the village; one of these belonged to the Archbishop of Paris, and was at that time the abode of his niece, the Duchess of Longueville; the other was a convent of Jesuits, and was the property—a by no means unusual circumstance—of these worthy fathers.

At four o'clock D'Artagnan recommenced his journey. He proceeded slowly, and in a deep reverie. Planchet was also lost in thought, but the subject of their reflections was not the same.

One word which their landlady had pronounced had given a particular turn to D'Artagnan's deliberations—this was the name of Madame de Longueville.

That name was, indeed, one to inspire imagination, and to produce thought. Madame de Longueville was one of the highest ladies in the realm; she was also one of the greatest beauties at the court. She had formerly been suspected of an intimacy of too tender a nature with Coligny—who, for her sake, had been killed in a duel, in the Place Royale, by the Duc de Guise. She was now connected by a bond of a political nature with the Prince de Marsillac, the eldest son of the old Duc de Rochefoucauld, whom she was trying to inspire with an enmity toward the Duc de Condé, her brother-in-law, whom she now hated mortally.

D'Artagnan thought of all these matters. He remembered how, at the Louvre, he had often seen, as she passed by him in the full radiance of her dazzling charms, the beautiful Madame de Longueville. He thought of Aramis, who, without possessing any greater advantages than he had, had formerly been the lover of Madame de Chevreuse, who had been in another court what Madame de Longueville was in that day; and he wondered how it was that there should be in the world people who succeed in every wish—some in ambition, others in love—while others, either from chance or from ill-luck, or from some natural defect or impediment, remain only halfway on the road toward the goal of their hopes and expectations.

He was confessing to himself that he belonged to the latter class of persons, when Planchet approached, and said:

"I will lay a wager, your honor, that you and I are thinking of the same thing."

"I doubt it, Planchet," replied D'Artagnan—"but what are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking, sir, of those desperate-looking men who were drinking in the inn where we rested."

"Always cautious, Planchet."

"'Tis instinct, your honor."

"Well, what does your instinct tell you now?"

"Sir, my instinct told me that those people were assembled there for some bad purpose; and I was reflecting on what my instinct had told me, in the darkest corner of the stable, when a man, wrapped in a cloak, and followed by two other men, came in."

"Ah!"

"One of these two men said, 'He must certainly be at Noisy, or be coming there this evening, for I've seen his servant.'"

"'Art thou sure?' said the man in the cloak."

"'Yes, my prince.'"

"My prince!" interrupted D'Artagnan.

"Yes, 'my prince'—but listen. 'If he is here'—this is what the other man said—'let's see decidedly what to do with him.'"

"'What to do with him?' answered the prince."

"'Yes, he's not a man to allow himself to be taken anyhow—he'll defend himself.'"

"'Well—we must try to take him alive. Have you cords to bind him with, and a gag to stop his mouth?'"

"'We have.'"

"'Remember that he will most likely be disguised as a horseman.'"

"'Yes, yes, my lord—don't be uneasy.'"

"'Besides, I shall be there.'"

"'You will assure us that justice——'"

"'Yes, yes—I answer for all that,' the prince said."

"'Well, then, we'll do our best.' Having said that, they went out of the stable."

"Well—what matters all that to us?" said D'Artagnan; "this is one of those attempts that happen every day."

"Are you sure that we are not its objects?"

"We—why?"

"Just remember what they said;" and Planchet recapitulated what he had just stated.

"Alas! my dear Planchet," said D'Artagnan, sighing, "we are unfortunately no longer in those times in which princes would care to assassinate me. Those were good old days: never fear—these people owe us no grudge."

"Is your honor sure?"

"I can answer for it they do not."

"Well—we won't speak of it any more, then;" and Planchet took his place in D'Artagnan's suite with that sub-

lime confidence which he had always had in his master, and which fifteen years of separation had not destroyed.

They had traveled onward about half a mile, when Planchet came close up to D'Artagnan.

"Stop, sir; look yonder," he whispered; "don't you see, in the darkness, something pass by, like shadows? I fancy I hear horses' feet."

"Impossible!" returned D'Artagnan. "The ground is soaked in rain; yet I fancy, as thou sayest, that I see something."

At this moment the neighing of a horse struck upon his ear—coming through darkness and space.

"There are men somewhere about; but that's of no consequence to us," said D'Artagnan; "let us ride onward."

At about half-past eight o'clock they reached the first houses in Noisy; every one was in bed, and not a light was to be seen in the village. The obscurity was broken only now and then by the dark lines of the roofs of houses. Here and there a dog barked behind a door, or an affrighted cat fled precipitately from the midst of the pavement, to take refuge behind a heap of faggots, from which retreat her eyes shone like carbuncles. These were the only living creatures that seemed to inhabit the village.

Toward the middle of the town, commanding the principal open space, rose a dark mass, separated from the rest of the world by two lanes, and overshadowed in the front by enormous lime-trees. D'Artagnan looked attentively at the building.

"This," he said to Planchet, "must be the archbishop's château, the abode of the fair Madame de Longueville; but the convent, where is that?"

"The convent, your honor, is at the end of the village; I know it well."

"Well, then, Planchet, gallop up to it, while I tighten my horse's girth, and come back and tell me if there is a light in any of the Jesuits' windows."

In about five minutes Planchet returned.

"Sir," he said, "there is one window of the convent lighted up."

"Hem! If I were a 'Frondeur,'" said D'Artagnan, "I should knock here, and should be sure of a good supper. If I were a monk, I should knock yonder, and should have a good supper there, too; whereas, 'tis very possible that, between the castle and the convent, we shall sleep on hard beds, dying with hunger and thirst."

"Yes," added Planchet, "like the famous ass of Buridan. Shall I knock?"

"Hush!" replied D'Artagnan; "the light in the window is extinguished."

"Do you hear nothing?" whispered Planchet.

"What is that noise?"

There came a sound like a whirlwind, and at the same time two troops of horsemen, each composed of ten men, sallied forth from each of the lanes which encompassed the house, and surrounded D'Artagnan and Planchet.

"Heyday!" cried D'Artagnan, drawing his sword, and taking refuge behind his horse; "are you not mistaken? is it us you wish to attack—us?"

"Here he is! we have him now," said the horsemen, rushing on D'Artagnan with naked swords.

"Don't let him escape," said a loud voice.

"No, my lord; be assured, we shall not."

D'Artagnan thought it was now time for him to join in the conversation.

"Halloo, gentlemen!" he called out in his Gascon accent, "what do you want—what do you demand?"

"Thou wilt soon know," shouted a chorus of horsemen.

"Stop, stop!" cried he whom they had addressed as "my lord;" "'tis not his voice."

"Ah! just so, gentlemen! pray do people get into passions at random at Noisy? Take care, for I warn you that the first man that comes within the length of my sword—and my sword is long—I rip him up."

The chieftain of the party drew near.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, in a lofty tone, and like one accustomed to command.

"And you—what are *you* doing here?" replied D'Artagnan.

"Be civil, or I shall beat you; for, although one may not choose to proclaim one's self, one insists on respect suitable to one's rank."

"You don't choose to discover yourself, because you are the leader of an ambuscade," returned D'Artagnan; "but with regard to myself, who am traveling quietly with my own servant, I have not the same reasons as you have to conceal my name."

"Enough! enough! what is your name?"

"I shall tell you my name in order that you may know where to find me, my lord, or my prince, as it may suit you best to be called," said our Gascon, who did not choose to

seem to yield to a threat. "Do you know Monsieur D'Artagnan?"

"Lieutenant in the king's regiment of musketeers?" said the voice; "you are Monsieur D'Artagnan?"

"I am."

"Then you are come here to defend him?"

"Him? whom? Him?"

"Him whom we are seeking."

"It seems," said D'Artagnan, "that while I thought I was coming to Noisy, I have entered, without suspecting it, into the kingdom of mysteries."

"Come," replied the same lofty tone, "answer. Are you waiting for him underneath these windows? Did you come to Noisy to defend him?"

"I am waiting for no one," replied D'Artagnan, who was beginning to be angry.

"Well, well," rejoined the leader, "there's no doubt 'tis a Gascon who is speaking, and therefore not the man we are looking for. We shall meet again, Master D'Artagnan; let us go onward, gentlemen."

And the troop, angry and complaining, disappeared in the darkness, and took the road to Paris. D'Artagnan and Planchet remained for some moments still on the defensive; then, as the noise of the horsemen became more and more distant, they sheathed their swords.

"Thou seest, simpleton," said D'Artagnan to his servant, "that they wished no harm to us."

"But to whom, then?"

"I faith! I don't know, nor care. What I care for now is to make my way into the Jesuits' convent; so, to horse, and let us knock at their door. Happen what will—devil take them—they won't eat us."

And he mounted his horse. Planchet had just done the same, when an unexpected weight fell upon the back of his horse, which sank down.

"Hey, your honor!" cried Planchet, "I've a man behind me."

D'Artagnan turned round, and saw plainly, two human forms upon Planchet's horse.

"'Tis then the devil that pursues us!" he cried, drawing his sword, and preparing to attack the new foe.

"No, no, dear D'Artagnan," said the figure, "'tis not the devil, 'tis Aramis; gallop fast, Planchet, and when you come to the end of the village, go to the left."

And Planchet, with Aramis behind him, set off full gallop,

followed by D'Artagnan, who began to think he was dreaming some incoherent and fantastic dream.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ABBE D'HERBLAY.

AT THE extremity of the village Planchet turned to the left, in obedience to the orders of Aramis, and stopped underneath the window which had a light in it. Aramis alighted, and knocked three times with his hands. Immediately the window was opened, and a ladder of rope was let down from it.

"My friend," said Aramis, "if you like to ascend I shall be delighted to receive you."

"Pass on before me, I beg of you."

"As the late cardinal used to say to the late king—only to show you the way, sire." And Aramis ascended the ladder quickly, and reached the window in an instant.

D'Artagnan followed, but less nimbly, showing plainly that this mode of ascent was not one to which he was accustomed.

"Sir," said Planchet, when he saw D'Artagnan on the summit of the ladder, "this way is easy for Monsieur Aramis, and even for you; in case of necessity I might also climb up, but my two horses cannot mount the ladder."

"Take them to yonder shed, my friend," said Aramis, pointing to a building in the plain, "there you will find hay and straw for them; then come back here, and knock thrice, and we will give you out some provisions. Marry, forsooth, people don't die of hunger here."

And Aramis, drawing in the ladder, closed the window. D'Artagnan then looked around him attentively.

Never was there an apartment at the same time more warlike and more elegant. At each corner there were trophies, presenting to the view swords of all sorts, and four great pictures representing in their ordinary military costume the Cardinal de Lorraine, the Cardinal de Richelieu, the Cardinal de la Valette and the Archbishop of Bordeaux. Exteriorly nothing in the room showed that it was the habitation of an abbé. The hangings were of damask, the carpets came from Alençon, and the bed, more especially, had more the look of a fine lady's couch, with its trimmings of fine lace, and its embroidered counterpane, than of a man who had made a

vow that he would endeavor to gain heaven by fasting and mortification.

While D'Artagnan was engaged in contemplation the door opened, and Bazin entered; on perceiving the musketeer he uttered an exclamation which was almost a cry of despair.

"My dear Bazin," said D'Artagnan, "I am delighted to see with what wonderful composure you tell a lie even in a church!"

"Sir," replied Bazin, "I have been taught by the good Jesuit fathers, that it is permitted to tell a falsehood when it is told in a good cause."

"So far well," said Aramis; "we are dying of hunger. Serve us up the best supper you can, and especially give us some good wine."

Bazin bowed low, and left the room.

"Now we are alone, dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan "tell me how the devil did you manage to light upon the back of Planchet's horse?"

"Eh! faith!" answered Aramis, "as you see, from heaven."

"From heaven!" replied D'Artagnan, shaking his head; "you have no more the appearance of coming from thence than you have of going there."

"My friend," said Aramis, with a look of imbecility on his face which D'Artagnan had never observed while he was in the musketeers, "if I did not come from heaven, at least I was leaving paradise, which is almost the same."

"Here, then, is a puzzle for the learned," observed D'Artagnan; "until now they have never been able to agree as to the situation of paradise: some place it on Mount Ararat, others between the Tigris and the Euphrates; it seems that they have been looking very far off for it, while it was actually very near. Paradise is at Noisy le See, upon the site of the archbishop's château. People do not go out from it by the door, but by the window; one doesn't descend here by the marble steps of a peristyle, but by the branches of a lime tree; and the angel with a flaming sword who guards this elysium, seems to have changed his celestial name of Gabriel into that of the more terrestrial one of the Prince de Marsillac."

Aramis burst out into a fit of laughter.

"You were always a merry companion, my dear D'Artagnan," he said, "and your witty Gascon fancy has not deserted you. Yes, there is something in what you say; nevertheless,

do not believe that it is Madame de Longueville with whom I am in love."

"A plague on't! I shall not do so. After having been so long in love with Madame de Chevreuse, you would not lay your heart at the feet of her mortal enemy!"

"Yes," replied Aramis, with an absent air, "yes, that poor duchess! I once loved her much, and to do her justice, she was very useful to us. Eventually she was obliged to leave France. He was a relentless enemy, that damned cardinal," continued Aramis, glancing at the portrait of the old minister. "He had even given orders to arrest her, and would have cut off her head, had she not escaped with her waiting-maid—poor Kitty! The duchess escaped in man's clothes, and a couplet was made upon her"—and Aramis hummed a few lines of a well-known song of the day.

"Bravo!" cried D'Artagnan, "you sing charmingly, dear Aramis. I do not perceive that singing masses has altered your voice."

"My dear D'Artagnan," replied Aramis, "you understand, when I was a musketeer I mounted guard as seldom as I could; now, when I am an abbé, I say as few masses as I can. But to return to our duchess."

"Which? the Duchess de Chevreuse or the Duchess de Longueville?"

"Have I not already told you that there is nothing between me and the Duchess de Longueville? little flirtations, perhaps, and that's all. No, I spoke of the Duchess de Chevreuse; did you see her after her return from Brussels, after the king's death?"

"Yes, she is still beautiful."

"Yes," said Aramis, "I saw her also at that time. I gave her good advice, by which she did not profit. I ventured to tell her that Mazarin was the lover of Anne of Austria. She wouldn't believe me, saying, that she knew Anne of Austria, who was too proud to love such a worthless coxcomb. She since plunged into the cabal headed by the Duke of Beaufort; and the 'coxcomb' arrested De Beaufort, and banished Madame de Chevreuse."

"You know," resumed D'Artagnan, "that she has had leave to return to France?"

"Yes, she is come back, and is going to commit some fresh folly or another; she is much changed."

"In that respect unlike you, my dear Aramis, for you are still the same; you have still your beautiful dark hair, still your elegant figure, still your feminine hands, which are admirably suited to a prelate."

"Yes," replied Aramis, "I am extremely careful of my appearance. Do you know that I am growing old; I am nearly thirty-seven."

"Mind, Aramis"—D'Artagnan smiled as he spoke—"since we are together again, let us agree on one point, what age shall we be in future?"

"How?"

"Formerly, I was your junior by two or three years, and if I am not mistaken, I am turned forty years old."

"Indeed! Then 'tis I who am mistaken, for you have always been a good chronologist. By your reckoning I must be forty-three at least. The devil I am! Don't let it out at the Hotel Rambouillet, it would ruin me," replied the abbé.

"Don't be afraid, I shall not," said D'Artagnan.

"And now let us go to supper," said Aramis, seeing that Bazin had returned and prepared the table.

The two friends sat down, and Aramis began to cut up fowls, partridges, and hams with admirable skill.

"The deuce!" cried D'Artagnan; "do you live in this way always?"

"Yes, pretty well. The coadjutor has given me dispensations from fasting on the *jours maigres*, on account of my health; then I have engaged as my cook, the cook who lived with Lafollome—you know whom I mean?—the friend of the cardinal, and the famous epicure whose grace after dinner used to be—'Good Lord, do me the favor to make me digest what I have eaten.'"

"Nevertheless, he died of indigestion, in spite of his grace," said D'Artagnan.

"What can you expect?" replied Aramis, in a tone of resignation; "a man must fulfill his destiny."

"If it be not an indelicate question," resumed D'Artagnan, "are you grown rich?"

"Oh, heaven! no. I make about twelve thousand francs a year, without counting a little benefice which the prince gave me."

"And how do you make your twelve thousand francs—by your poems?"

"No, I've given up poetry, except now and then to write a drinking song, some gay sonnet, or some innocent epigram; I make sermons, my friend."

"How! sermons? Do you preach them?"

"No; I sell them to those of my cloth who wish to become great orators."

"Ah, indeed! and you have not been tempted by the hopes of reputation yourself?"

"I should, my dear D'Artagnan, have been so, but nature said 'No.' When I am in the pulpit, if by chance, a pretty woman looks at me, I look at her again; if she smiles, I smile also. Then I speak at random; instead of preaching about the torments of hell, I talk of the joys of paradise. An event took place in the Church of St. Louis au Marais. A gentleman laughed in my face. I stopped short to tell him that he was a fool; the congregation went out to get stones to stone me with; but while they were away, I found means to conciliate the priests who were present, so that my foe was pelted instead of me. 'Tis true that he came the next morning to my house, thinking that he had to do with an abbé—like all other abbés."

"And what was the end of the affair?"

"We met in the Place Royale—Egad, you know about it."

"Was I not your second?" cried D'Artagnan.

"You were—you know how I settled the matter!"

"Did he die?"

"I don't know. But at all events, I gave him absolution 'in articulo mortis.' 'Tis enough to kill the body, without killing the soul."

A long silence ensued after this disclosure. Aramis was the first to break it.

"What are you thinking of, D'Artagnan?" he began.

"I was thinking, my good friend, that when you were a musketeer you turned your thoughts incessantly to the church, and now that you are an abbé you are perpetually longing to be a musketeer."

"'Tis true—man, as you know," said Aramis, "is a strange animal, made up of contradictions. Since I became an abbé I dream of nothing but battles. I practice shooting all day long, with an excellent master whom we have here."

"How! here?"

"Yes, in this convent—we have always a '*maître d'armes*' in a convent of Jesuits."

"Then you would have killed the Prince de Marsillac if he had attacked you singly?"

"Certainly," replied Aramis, "with the greatest ease."

"Well, dear Aramis, you ask me why I have been searching for you. I sought you, in order to offer you a way of killing Monsieur de Marsillac whenever you please—prince though he may be. Are you ambitious?"

"As ambitious as Alexander."

"Well, my friend, I bring you the means of being rich, powerful, and free, if you wish. Have you, my dear Aramis, thought sometimes of those happy days of our youth that we passed laughing, and drinking, and fighting each other for play?"

"Certainly—and more than once regretted them—'twas a happy time."

"Well, these happy days may return; I am commissioned to find out my companions, and I began by you—who were the very soul of our society."

Aramis bowed rather with respect than pleasure at the compliment.

"To meddle in politics," he exclaimed, in a languid voice, leaning back in his easy-chair. "Ah! dear D'Artagnan! see how regularly I live—and how easy I am here. We have experienced the ingratitude of 'the great,' as you know."

"'Tis true," replied D'Artagnan. "Yet the great sometimes repent of their ingratitude."

"In that case, it would be quite another thing. Come! let's be merciful to every sinner; besides, you are right in another respect, which is, in thinking that if we were to meddle in politics, there could not be a better time than this."

"How can you know that? You would never interest yourself in politics?"

"Ah? without caring about them myself, I live among those who are much occupied in them. Poet as I am, I am intimate with Sarazin—who is devoted to the Prince de Conti, and with Monsieur de Bois-Robert, who, since the death of Cardinal Richelieu, is of all or any party, so that political discussions have not altogether been uninteresting to me."

"I have no doubt of it," said D'Artagnan.

"Now, my dear friend, don't look upon all I tell you as merely the statement of a monk—but of a man who resembles an echo—repeating simply what he hears. I understand that Mazarin is, at this very moment, extremely uneasy as to the state of affairs; that his orders are not respected like those of our former bugbear, the deceased cardinal, whose portrait you see here;—for whatever may be thought of him, it must be allowed that Richelieu was a great man."

"I shall not contradict you there," said D'Artagnan.

"My first impressions were favorable to the minister; but, as I am very ignorant of those sort of things, and as the humility which I profess obliges me not to rest on my own judgment, but to ask the opinion of others, I have inquired—Eh?—my friend——"

Aramis paused.

"Well?—what?" asked his friend.

"Well—I must mortify myself. I must confess that I was mistaken; Monsieur de Mazarin is not a man of genius, as I thought: he is a man of no origin—once a servant of Cardinal Bentivoglio, and he got on by intrigue. He is an upstart, a man of no name, who will only be the tool of a party in France. He will amass wealth, he will injure the king's revenue, and pay to himself the pensions which Richelieu paid to others. He is neither a gentleman in manner nor in feeling, but a sort of buffoon, a punchinello, a pantaloon. Do you know him?—I do not?"

"Hem!" said D'Artagnan, "there is some truth in what you say—but you speak of him, not of his party, nor of his resources."

"It is true—the queen is for him."

"Something in his favor."

"But he will never have the king."

"A mere child."

"A child who will be of age in four years. Then he has neither the parliament nor the people with him—they represent the wealth of the country; nor the nobles, nor the princes—who are the military power of France; but perhaps I am wrong in speaking thus to you, who have evidently a leaning to Mazarin."

"I!" cried D'Artagnan, "not in the least."

"You spoke of a mission."

"Did I?—I was wrong then—no, I said what you say—there is a crisis at hand. Well! let's fly the feather before the wind, let us join with that side to which the wind will carry it, and resume our adventurous life. We were once four valiant knights—four hearts fondly united; let us unite again, not our hearts, which have never been severed, but our courage and our fortunes. Here's a good opportunity for getting something better than a diamond."

"You are right, D'Artagnan; I held a similar project, but, as I have not your fruitful and vigorous imagination, the idea was suggested to me. Every one nowadays wants auxiliaries; propositions have been made to me, and I confess to you frankly, that the coadjutor has made me speak out."

"The Prince de Conti! the cardinal's enemy?"

"No!—the king's friend."

"But the king is with Mazarin."

"He is, but not willingly—in appearance, not heart; and that is exactly the snare that the king's enemies prepare for a poor child."

"Ah! but this is, indeed, civil war which you propose to me, dear Aramis."

"War for the king."

"Yet the king will be at the head of the army on Mazarin's side."

"But his heart will be in the army commanded by the Duc de Beaufort."

"Monsieur de Beaufort? He is at Vincennes."

"Did I name Monsieur de Beaufort?" said Aramis.

"Monsieur de Beaufort or some one else. The prince, perhaps. But Monsieur de Conti is going to be made a cardinal."

"Are there not warlike cardinals?" said Aramis.

"Do you see any great advantage in adhering to this party?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I foresee in it the aid of powerful princes."

"With the enmity of the government."

"Counteracted by parliament and insurrections."

"That may be done, if they can separate the king from his mother."

"That may be done," said Aramis.

"Never!" cried D'Artagnan. "You, Aramis, know Anne of Austria better than I do. Do you think she will ever forget that her son is her safeguard, her shield, the pledge for her dignity, for her fortune, for her life? Should she forsake Mazarin she must join her son, and go over to the prince's side; but you know better than I do that there are certain reasons why she can never abandon Mazarin."

"Perhaps you are right," said Aramis thoughtfully; "therefore I shall not pledge myself."

"To them, or to us, do you mean, Aramis?"

"To no one."

"I am a priest," resumed Aramis. "What have I to do with politics? I am not obliged to read any breviary. I have a little circle of holy abbés and pretty women; everything goes on smoothly; so certainly, dear friend, I shall not meddle in politics."

"Well, listen, my dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan, "your philosophy convinces me, on my honor. I don't know what devil of an insect stung me, and made me ambitious. I have a post by which I live; at the death of Monsieur de Tréville, who is old, I may be a captain, which is a very pretty position for a poor Gascon. Instead of running after adventures, I shall accept an invitation from Porthos; I shall go and shoot on his estate. You know he has estates—Porthos?"

"I should think so, indeed. Ten leagues of wood, of marshland and valleys; he is lord of the hill and the plain, and is now carrying on a suit for his feudal rights against the bishop of Noyon!"

"Good," said D'Artagnan to himself. "That's what I wanted to know. Porthos is in Picardy!"

Then aloud—

"And he has taken his ancient name of Valon?"

"To which he adds that of Bracieux—an estate which has been a barony, by my troth."

"So that Porthos will be a baron."

"I don't doubt it. The 'Baroness Porthos' will be particularly charming."

And the two friends began to laugh.

"So," D'Artagnan resumed, "you will not become a partisan of Mazarin's."

"Nor you of the Prince de Condé?"

"No, lovers belong to no party, but remain friends; let us be neither Cardinalists nor Frondistes."

"Adieu, then." And D'Artagnan poured out a glass of wine.

"To old times," he said.

"Yes," returned Aramis. "Unhappily those times are past."

"Nonsense! They will return," said D'Artagnan. "At all events, if you want me, remember the Rue Ticquetonne, Hotel de la Chevrette."

"And I shall be at the convent of Jesuits, from six in the morning to eight at night come by the door. From eight in the evening until six in the morning come in by the window. Go then, my friend," he added, "follow your career; Fortune smiles on you; do not let her flee from you. As for me, I remain in my humility and my indolence. Adieu!"

"Thus, 'tis quite decided," said D'Artagnan, "that what I have to offer you does not suit you?"

"On the contrary, it would suit me were I like any other man," rejoined Aramis, "but, I repeat, I am made up of contradictions. What I hate to-day, I adore to-morrow, and vice versa. You see, that I cannot, like you for instance, settle on any fixed plan."

"Thou liest, subtle one," said D'Artagnan to himself. "Thou alone, on the contrary, knowest how to choose thy object, and to gain it stealthily."

The friends embraced. They descended into the plain by the ladder. Planchet met them close by the shed. D'Artagnan jumped on his saddle, then the old companions in arms

again shook hands. D'Artagnan and Planchet spurred on their horses and took the road to Paris.

But after he had gone about two hundred steps, D'Artagnan stopped short, alighted, threw the bridle of his horse over the arm of Planchet, and took the pistols from his saddle-bow to fasten them to his girdle.

"What's the matter?" asked Planchet.

"This is the matter; be he ever so cunning, he shall never say that I was his dupe. Stand here, don't stir, turn your back to the road, and wait for me."

Having thus spoken, D'Artagnan cleared the ditch by the roadside, and crossed the plain so as to wind around the village. He had observed between the house that Madame de Longueville inhabited and the convent of Jesuits, an open space surrounded by a hedge.

The moon had now risen, and he could see well enough to retrace his road.

He reached the hedge, and hid himself behind it; in passing by the house where the scene which we have related took place, he remarked that the window was again lighted up, and he was convinced that Aramis had not yet returned to his own apartment, and that when he did return there, it would not be alone.

In truth, in a few minutes he heard steps approaching, and low whispers.

Close to the hedge the steps stopped.

D'Artagnan knelt down near the thickest part of the hedge.

Two men—to the astonishment of D'Artagnan—appeared shortly: soon, however, his surprise vanished, for he heard the murmurs of a soft, harmonious voice; one of these two men was a woman disguised as a cavalier.

"Calm yourself, dear René," said the soft voice, "the same thing will never happen again. I have discovered a sort of subterranean passage which runs under the street, and we shall only have to raise one of the marble slabs before the door to open you an entrance and an outlet."

"Oh!" answered another voice, which D'Artagnan soon recognized as that of Aramis. "I swear to you, princess, that your reputation does not depend on precautions, and that I would risk my life rather than——"

"Yes, yes! I know you are brave and venturesome as any man in the world, but you do not belong to me alone; you belong to all our party. Be prudent! be sensible!"

"I always obey, madam, when I am commanded by so gentle a voice."

He kissed her hand tenderly.

"Ah!" exclaimed the cavalier with the soft voice.

"What's the matter?" asked Aramis.

"Do you not see that the wind has blown off my hat?"

Aramis rushed after the fugitive hat. D'Artagnan took advantage of the circumstance to find a place in the hedge not so thick, where his glance could penetrate to the supposed cavalier. At that instant, the moon, inquisitive, perhaps, like D'Artagnan, came from behind a cloud, and by her light D'Artagnan recognized the large blue eyes, the golden hair, and the classic head of the Duchess de Longueville.

Aramis returned, laughing; one hat on his head, and the other in his hand; and he and his companion resumed their walk toward the convent.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan, rising and brushing his knees; "now I have thee—thou art a Frondeur, and the lover of Madame de Longueville."

CHAPTER X.

MONSIEUR PORTHOS DE VALON DE BRACIEUX DE PIERREFONDS.

THANKS to what Aramis had told him, D'Artagnan, who knew already that Porthos called himself De Valon, was now aware that he styled himself, from his estate, De Bracieux; and that he was, on account of this estate, engaged in a lawsuit with the bishop of Noyon.

At eight o'clock in the evening, he and Planchet again left the hotel of the Chevrete, quitting Paris by the Porte Saint Denis.

Their route lay through Daumartin—and then, taking one of two roads that branched off—to Compiègne, when it was necessary to inquire the situation of the estate of Bracieux.

They traveled always at night; and having learned at Villars-Cotterets that Porthos was at the property which he had lately bought, called Pierrefonds, they set out, taking the road which leads from Villars-Cotterets to Compiègne.

The morning was beautiful; and in this early springtime the birds sang on the trees, and the sunbeams shone through the misty glades, like curtains of golden gauze.

In other parts of the forest the light could scarcely penetrate through the foliage; and the stems of two old oak trees—the refuge of the squirrel, startled by the travelers—were in deep shadow.

There came up from all nature in the dawn of day a perfume of herbs, flowers, and leaves, which delighted the heart. D'Artagnan, sick of the closeness of Paris, thought that when a man had three names of his different estates joined one to another, he ought to be very happy in such a paradise; then he shook his head, saying, "If I were Porthos, and D'Artagnan came to make to me such a proposition as I am going to make to him, I know what I should say to it."

As to Planchet, he thought of nothing.

At the extremity of the wood D'Artagnan perceived the road which had been described to him; and at the end of the road he saw the towers of an immense feudal castle.

"Oh! oh!" he said, "I fancied this castle belonged to the ancient branch of Orleans. Can Porthos have negotiated for it with the Duc de Longueville?"

"Faith!" exclaimed Planchet. "Here's land in good condition; if it belongs to Monsieur Porthos, I shall wish him joy."

"Zounds!" cried D'Artagnan, "don't call him Porthos, nor even Valon: call him De Bracieux or De Pierrefonds; thou wilt ruin my mission otherwise."

As he approached the castle, which had first attracted his eye, D'Artagnan was convinced that it could not be there that his friend dwelt: the towers, though solid, and as if built yesterday, were open and broken. One might have fancied that some giant had cloven them with blows from a hatchet.

On arriving at the extremity of the castle, D'Artagnan found himself overlooking a beautiful valley, in which, at the foot of a charming little lake, stood several scattered houses, which, humble in their aspect, and covered, some with tiles and others with thatch, seemed to acknowledge as their sovereign lord a pretty château, built about the beginning of the reign of Henry IV., and surmounted by some stately weathercocks. D'Artagnan felt now no doubt of this being the dwelling of Porthos.

The road led straight up to this château, which, compared to its ancestor on the hill, was exactly what a fop of the coterie of the Duc d'Enghien would have been beside a knight in steel armor in the time of Charles VI. D'Artagnan spurred his horse on and pursued his road, followed by Planchet at the same pace.

In ten minutes D'Artagnan reached the end of an alley regularly planted with fine poplars, and terminating in an iron gate, the points and crossed bars of which were gilt. In the midst of this avenue was a nobleman dressed in green, and

with as much gilding about him as the iron gate, riding on a tall horse. On his right hand and his left were two footmen, with the seams of their dresses laced. A considerable number of clowns were assembled and rendered homage to their lord.

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan to himself, "can this be the Seigneur du Valon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds? Well-a-day! how he is wrinkled since he has given up the name of Porthos!"

"This cannot be Monsieur Porthos," observed Planchet, replying, as it were, to his master's thoughts. "Monsieur Porthos was six feet high; this man is scarcely five."

"Nevertheless," said D'Artagnan, "the people are bowing very low to this person."

As he spoke he rode toward the tall horse—to the man of importance and his valets. As he approached he seemed to recognize the features of this individual.

"Jesus!" cried Planchet, "can it be he?"

At this exclamation the man on horseback turned slowly, and with a lofty air; and the two travelers could see, displayed in all their brilliancy, the large eyes, the vermilion visage, and the eloquent smile of Mousqueton.

It was, indeed, Mousqueton—Mousqueton, as fat as a pig, rolling about with rude health, puffed out with good living, who, recognizing D'Artagnan, and acting very differently from the hypocrite Bazin, slipped off his horse and approached the officer with his hat off; so that the homage of the assembled crowd was turned toward this new sun, which eclipsed the former luminary.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan! Monsieur d'Artagnan!" cried Mousqueton, his fat cheeks swelling out and his whole frame perspiring with joy. "Monsieur d'Artagnan! oh! what joy for my lord and master De Valon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds!"

"Thou good Mousqueton! where is thy master?"

"You are on his property."

"But how handsome thou art—how fat! how thou'st prospered and grown stout!" and D'Artagnan could not restrain his astonishment at the change which good fortune had produced upon the once famished one.

"Hey? yes, thank God, I am pretty well," said Mousqueton.

"But dost thou say nothing to thy friend Planchet?"

"How? my friend Planchet? Planchet art thou here?" cried Mousqueton, with open arms and eyes full of tears.

"My very self," replied Planchet; "but I wanted first to see if thou wert grown proud."

"Proud toward an old friend? never, Planchet! thou wouldst not have thought so hadst thou known Mousqueton well."

"So far so well," answered Planchet, alighting, and extending his arms to Mousqueton, and the two servants embraced with an emotion which touched those who were present, and made them suppose that Planchet was a great lord in disguise, so greatly did they estimate the position of Mousqueton.

"And now, sir," resumed Mousqueton, when he had rid himself of Planchet, who had in vain tried to clasp his hands round his friend's back, "now, sir, allow me to leave you, for I could not permit my master to hear of your arrival from any one but myself; he would never forgive me for not having preceded you."

"This dear friend," said D'Artagnan, carefully avoiding to utter either the former name borne by Porthos, or his new one; "then he has not forgotten me?"

"Forgotten! he!" cried Mousqueton; "there's not a day, sir, that we don't expect to hear that you were made marshal, either instead of Monsieur de Gassion or of Monsieur de Bas-sompierre."

On D'Artagnan's lips there played one of those rare and melancholy smiles which seemed to come from the depth of his heart; the last trace of youth and happiness which had survived disappointment.

"And you—fellows," resumed Mousqueton, "stay near Monsieur le Comte D'Artagnan, and pay him every attention in your power, while I go to prepare my lord for his visit."

And mounting his horse, Mousqueton rode off down the avenue, on the grass, in an easy gallop.

"Ah! there!—there's something promising," said D'Artagnan. "No mysteries, no cloak to hide one's self in—no cunning policy here; people laugh outright, they weep for joy here. I see nothing but faces a yard broad; in short, it seems to me that Nature herself wears a holiday suit, and that the trees, instead of the leaves and flowers, are covered with red and green ribbons, as on gala days."

"As for me," said Planchet, "I seem to smell from this place even a most delectable smell of roast meat, and to see the scullions in a row by the hedge, hailing our approach. Ah! sir, what a cook must Monsieur Pierrefonds have, when he was so fond of eating and drinking, even while he was only called Monsieur Porthos!"

"Say no more!" cried D'Artagnan. "If the reality corresponds with appearances, I'm lost; for a man so well off will never change his happy condition; and I shall fail with him, as I have already done with Aramis."

CHAPTER XI.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN, IN DISCOVERING THE RETREAT OF PORTHOS, PERCEIVES THAT WEALTH DOES NOT PRODUCE HAPPINESS.

D'ARTAGNAN passed through the iron gate, and arrived in front of the château. He alighted, as he saw a species of giant on the steps. Let us do justice to D'Artagnan; that, independent of every selfish wish, his heart palpitated with joy when he saw that tall form and martial demeanor, which recalled to him a good and brave man.

He ran to Porthos and threw himself into his arms; the whole body of servants, arranged in a circle at a respectful distance, looked on with humble curiosity. Mousqueton, at the head of them, wiped his eyes. Porthos put his arm in that of his friend.

"Ah! how delightful to see you again, dear friend," he cried, in a voice which was now changed from a baritone into a bass; "you've not then forgotten me?"

"Forgot you! oh! dear De Valon, does one forget the happiest days of one's youth—one's dearest friends—the dangers we have dared together? on the contrary, there is not an hour that we have passed together that is not present to my memory."

"Yes, yes," said Porthos, trying to give to his mustache a curl which it had lost while he had been alone. "Yes, we did some fine things in our time, and we gave that poor cardinal some thread to unravel."

And he heaved a sigh.

"Under any circumstances," he resumed, "you are welcome, my dear friend; you will help me to recover my spirits; to-morrow we will hunt the hare on my plain, which is a superb tract of land, or we'll pursue the deer in my woods, which are magnificent. I have four harriers, which are considered the swiftest in our county, and a pack of hounds which are unequalled for twenty leagues round.

And Porthos heaved another sigh.

"But first," interposed D'Artagnan, "you must present me to Madame de Valon."

A third sigh from Porthos.

"I lost Madame de Valon two years ago," he said, "and you find me still in affliction on that account. That was the reason why I left my Château de Valon, near Corbeil, and came to my estate, Bracieux. Poor Madame de Valon! her temper was uncertain, but she came at last to accustom herself to my ways and to understand my little wishes."

"So you are free now—and rich?"

"Alas!" replied Porthos, "I am a widower, and have forty thousand francs a year. Let us go to breakfast."

"I shall be happy to do so; the morning air has made me hungry."

"Yes," said Porthos, "my air is excellent."

They went into the château; there was nothing but gilding, high and low; the cornices were gilt, the moldings were gilt, the legs and arms of the chairs were gilt. A table, ready set out, awaited them.

"You see," said Porthos, "this is my usual style."

"Devil take me!" answered D'Artagnan, "I wish you joy of it. The king has nothing like this."

"No," answered Porthos; "I hear it said that he is very badly fed by the cardinal, Monsieur de Mazarin. Taste this cutlet, my dear D'Artagnan; 'tis off one of my sheep."

"You have very tender mutton, and I wish you joy of it," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, the sheep are fed in my meadows, which are excellent pasture."

"Give me another cutlet."

"No, try this hare, which I had killed yesterday in one of my warrens."

"Zounds! what a flavor!" cried D'Artagnan; "ah! they are fed on thyme only, your hares."

"And how do you like my wine?" asked Porthos; "it is pleasant, isn't it?"

"Capital."

"It's nothing, however, but a wine of the country."

"Really."

"Yes, a small declivity to the south, yonder, on my hill, gives me twenty hogsheads."

"Quite a vineyard, hey?"

Porthos sighed for the fifth time—D'Artagnan had counted his sighs. He became curious to solve the problem.

"Well, now," he said, "it seems, my dear friend, that something vexes you; you are ill, perhaps? That health, which——"

"Excellent, my dear friend; better than ever. I could kill an ox with a blow of my fist."

"Well, then, family affairs, perhaps?"

"Family! I have, happily, only myself in the world to care for."

"But what makes you sigh?"

"My dear fellow," replied Porthos, "to be candid with you, I am not happy."

"You not happy, Porthos? You who have a château, meadows, hills, woods—you who have forty thousand francs a year—you not happy?"

"My dear friend, all those things I have, but I am alone in the midst of them."

"Surrounded, I suppose, only by clodhoppers, with whom you could not associate."

Porthos turned rather pale, and drank off a large glass of wine.

"No; but just think, there are paltry country squires who have all some title or another, and pretend to go back as far as Charlemagne, or at least to Hugh Capet. When I first came here, being the last comer, it was to me to make the first advances. I made them; but, you know, my dear friend, Madame de Valon——"

Porthos, in pronouncing these words, seemed to gulp down something.

"Madame de Valon was of doubtful gentility. She had in her first marriage (I don't think, D'Artagnan, I am telling you anything new) married a lawyer; they thought that 'nauseous;' you can understand that's a word bad enough to make one kill thirty thousand men. I have killed two, which has made people hold their tongues, but has not made me their friend. So that I have no society—I live alone; I am sick of it—my mind preys on itself."

D'Artagnan smiled. He now saw where the breastplate was weak, and prepared the blow.

"But now," he said, "that you are a widower, your wife's connections cannot injure you."

"Yes, but understand me; not being of a race of historic fame, like the De Coucys, who were content to be plain sirs, or the Rohans, who didn't wish to be dukes, all these people, who are all either vicomtes or comtes, go before me at church, in all the ceremonies, and I can say nothing to them. Ah! if I were merely a——"

"A baron, don't you mean?" cried D'Artagnan, finishing his friend's sentence.

"Ah! cried Porthos; "would I were but a baron!"

"Well, my friend, I am come to give you this very title, which you wish for so much."

Porthos gave a jump which shook all the room; two or three bottles fell and were broken. Mousqueton ran thither, hearing the noise.

Porthos waved his hand to Mousqueton to pick up the bottles.

"I am glad to see," said D'Artagnan, "that you have still that honest lad with you."

"He's my steward," replied Porthos; "he will never leave me. Go away now, Mouston."

"So he's called Mouston," thought D'Artagnan; "'tis too long a word to pronounce, Mousqueton."

"Well," he said aloud, "let us resume our conversation later—your people may suspect something—there may be spies about. You can suppose, Porthos, what I have to say relates to important matters."

"Devil take them, let us walk in the park," answered Porthos, "for the sake of digestion."

"Egad," said D'Artagnan, "the park is like everything else, and there are as many fish in your pond as rabbits in your warren; you're a happy man, my friend, since you have retained your love of the chase, and acquired that of fishing."

"My friend," replied Porthos, "I leave fishing to Mousqueton—it is a vulgar pleasure; but I shoot sometimes, that is to say, when I am dull, and I sit on one of those marble seats, have my gun brought to me, my favorite dog, and I shoot rabbits."

"Really, how very amusing!"

"Yes," replied Porthos, with a sigh; "it is very amusing!"

D'Artagnan now no longer counted the sighs.

"However, what had you to say to me?" he resumed, "let us return to that subject."

"With pleasure," replied D'Artagnan; "I must, however, first frankly tell you that you must change your mode of life."

"How?"

"Go into harness again, gird on your sword, run after adventures, and leave, as in old times, a little of your fat on the roadside."

"Ah! hang it!" said Porthos.

"I see you are spoiled, dear friend, you are corpulent, your arm has no longer that movement of which the late cardinal's guards had so many proofs."

"Ah! my fist is strong enough, I swear," cried Porthos, extending a hand like a shoulder of mutton.

"So much the better."

"Are we then to go to war?"

"By my troth, yes."

"Against whom?"

"Are you a politician, my friend?"

"Not in the least."

"Are you for Mazarin, or for the princes?"

"I am for no one."

"That is to say you are for us. Well, I tell you that I come to you from the cardinal."

This speech was heard by Porthos in the same sense as if it had still been in the year 1640, and related to the true cardinal.

"Ho! ho! what are the wishes of his eminence?"

"He wishes to have you in his service. Rochefort has spoken of you--and since, the queen--and, to inspire us with confidence, she has even placed in Mazarin's hands that famous diamond--you know about it--that I had sold to Monsieur Dessessarts, and of which I don't know how she regained possession."

"But it seems to me," said Porthos, "that she would have done much better to give it back to you."

"So I think," replied D'Artagnan; "but kings and queens are strange beings, and have odd fancies; nevertheless, since it is they who have riches and honors, one is devoted to them."

"Yes, one is devoted to them," repeated Porthos; "and you, to whom are you devoted, now?"

"To the king, the queen, and to the cardinal; moreover, I have answered for your devotion also; for, notwithstanding your forty thousand francs a-year, and, perhaps, even for the very reason that you have forty thousand francs a-year, it seems to me that a little coronet would do well on your carriage, hey?"

"Yes, indeed," said Porthos.

"Well, my dear friend, win it--it is at the point of our swords. We shall not interfere with each other--your object is a title; mine, money. If I can get enough to rebuild Artagnan, which my ancestors impoverished by the Crusades, allowed to fall into ruins, and to buy thirty acres of land about it, it is all I wish. I shall retire, and die tranquilly there."

"For my part," said Porthos, "I wish to be made a baron."

"You shall be one."

"And have you not seen any of our other friends?"

"Yes; I have seen Aramis."

"And what does he wish? To be a bishop?"

"Aramis," answered D'Artagnan, who did not wish to undeceive Porthos. "Aramis, fancy! has become a monk and a Jesuit, and lives like a bear. My offers could not rouse him."

"So much the worse! He was a clever man—and Athos?"

"I have not yet seen him. Do you know where I shall find him?"

"Near Blois. He is called Bragelonne. Only imagine, my dear friend. Athos, who was of as high birth as the emperor, and who inherits one estate which gives him the title of comte, what is he to do with all those dignities—Comte de la Fère, Comte de Bragelonne?"

"And he has no children with all these titles?"

"Ah!" said Porthos, "I have heard that he had adopted a young man who resembles him greatly."

"What, Athos? Our Athos, who was as virtuous as Scipio? Have you seen him?"

"No."

"Well, I shall see him to-morrow, and tell him about you; but I am afraid, '*entre nous*,' that his liking for wine has aged and degraded him."

"Yes, he used to drink a great deal," replied Porthos.

"And then he was older than any of us," added D'Artagnan.

"Some years only. His gravity made him look older."

"Well, then, if we can get Athos, all will be well. If we cannot, we will do without him. We two are worth a dozen."

"Yes," said Porthos, smiling at the remembrance of his former exploits; "but we four, altogether, would be equal to thirty-six; more especially as you say the work will not be easy. Will it last long?"

"By'r lady—two or three years, perhaps."

"So much the better," cried Porthos. "You have no idea, my friend, how my bones ache since I came here. Sometimes, on a Sunday, I take a ride in the fields, and on the property of my neighbors, in order to pick up some nice little quarrel, which I am really in want of, but nothing happens. Either they respect or they fear me, which is more likely; but they let me trample down the clover with my dogs, insult and obstruct every one, and I come back still more weary and low-spirited—that's all. At any rate, tell me—there's more chance of fighting at Paris, is there not?"

"In that respect, my dear friend, it's delightful. No more edicts, no more of the cardinal's guards, no more De Jussacs, nor other bloodhounds. I'Gad! underneath a lamp,

in an inn, anywhere, they ask, 'Are you one of the Fronde?' They unsheathe, and that's all that is said. The Duke de Guise killed Monsieur de Coligny in the Place Royale, and nothing was said of it."

"Ah, things go on well, then," said Porthos.

"Besides which, in a short time," resumed D'Artagnan, "we shall have set battles, cannonades, conflagrations, and there will be great variety."

"Well, then, I decide."

"I have your word, then?"

"Yes, 'tis given. I shall fight heart and soul for Mazarin; but——"

"But!"

"But he must make me a baron."

"Zounds!" said D'Artagnan, "that's settled already. I answer for your barony."

On this promise being given, Porthos, who had never doubted his friend's assurance, turned back with him toward the castle.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN THAT IF PORTHOS WERE DISCONTENTED WITH HIS CONDITION, MOUSQUETON WAS COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH HIS.

AS THEY returned toward the castle, D'Artagnan thought of the miseries of poor human nature, always dissatisfied with what it has, always desirous of what it has not.

In the position of Porthos, D'Artagnan would have been perfectly happy; and, to make Porthos contented, there was wanting—what?—five letters to put before his three names, and a little coronet to paint upon the panels of his carriage!

"I shall pass all my life," thought D'Artagnan, "in seeking for a man who is really contented with his lot."

While making this reflection, chance seemed, as it were, to give him the lie direct. When Porthos had left him to give some orders, he saw Mousqueton approaching. The face of the steward, despite one slight shade of care, light as a summer cloud, seemed one of perfect felicity.

"Here is what I am looking for," thought D'Artagnan; "but alas! the poor fellow does not know the purpose for which I am here."

He then made a sign for Mousqueton to come to him.

"Sir," said the servant, "I have a favor to ask you."

"Speak out, my friend."

"I am afraid to do so. Perhaps you will think, sir, that prosperity has spoiled me?"

"Art thou happy, friend?" asked D'Artagnan.

"As happy as possible, and yet, sir, you may make me even happier than I am."

"Well, speak, if it depends on me."

"Oh, sir! it depends on you only."

"I listen—I am waiting to hear."

"Sir, the favor I have to ask of you is, not to call me 'Mousqueton,' but 'Mouston.' Since I have had the honor of being my lord's steward, I have taken the last name as more dignified, and calculated to make my inferiors respect me. You, sir, know how necessary subordination is in an establishment of servants."

D'Artagnan smiled. Porthos lengthened out his names—Mousqueton cut his short.

"Well, my dear Mouston," he said, "rest satisfied. I will call thee Mouston; and, if it will make thee happy, I would not 'tutoyer' you any longer."

"Oh!" cried Mousqueton, reddening with joy; "if you do me, sir, such an honor, I shall be grateful all my life—'tis too much to ask."

D'Artagnan was secretly touched with remorse—not at inducing Porthos to enter into schemes in which his life and fortune would be in jeopardy—for Porthos, in the title of baron had his object and reward; but poor Mousqueton, whose only wish was to be called Mouston—was it not cruel to snatch him from the delightful state of peace and plenty in which he was?

He was thinking on these matters when Porthos summoned him to dinner.

While dessert was on the table the steward came in to consult his master upon the proceedings of the next day, and also with regard to the shooting party which had been proposed.

"Tell me, Mouston," said Porthos—"are my arms in good condition?"

"Your arms, my lord—what arms?"

"Zounds!—my weapons."

"What weapons?"

"My military weapons."

"Yes, my lord—I think so, at any rate."

"Make sure of it; and if they want it, have them rubbed up. Which is my best cavalry horse?"

"Vulcan."

"And the best hack?"

"Bayard."

"What horse dost thou choose for thyself?"

"I like Rustand, my lord; a good animal, whose paces suit me."

"Strong, thinkest thou?"

"Half Norman, half Mecklenburger—will go night and day."

"That will do for us. See to these horses. Clean up, or make some one else clean, my arms. Then take pistols with thee, and a hunting-knife."

"Are we then going to travel, my lord?" asked Mousqueton, rather uneasy.

"Something better still, Mouston."

"An expedition, sir?" asked the steward, whose roses began to change into lilies.

"We are going to return to the service, Mouston," replied Porthos, still trying to restore his mustache to the military curl that it had lost.

"Into the service—the king's service?" Mousqueton trembled; even his fat smooth cheeks shook as he spoke, and he looked at D'Artagnan with an air of reproach; he staggered, and his voice was almost choked.

"Yes and no. We shall serve in a campaign, seek out all sorts of adventures; return, in short, to our former life."

These last words fell on Mousqueton like a thunderbolt. It was these terrible former days which made the present so delightful; and the blow was so great that he rushed out, overcome, and forgot to shut the door.

The two friends remained alone to speak of the future, and to build castles in the air. The good wine which Mousqueton had placed before them gave to D'Artagnan a perspective shining with quadruples and pistoles, and showed to Porthos a blue ribbon and a ducal mantle; they were, in fact, asleep on the table when the servants came to beg them to go to bed.

Mousqueton was, however, a little consoled by D'Artagnan, who the next day told him that in all probability war would always be carried on in the heart of Paris, and within reach of the Château de Valon, which was near Corbeil; of Bracieux which was near Melun; and of Pierrefonds, which was between Compiègne and Villars-Cotterets.

"But—formerly—it appears," began Mousqueton timidly.

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "we don't now make war as we did formerly. To-day it's a sort of diplomatic arrangement; ask Planchet."

Mousqueton inquired, therefore, the state of the case of his old friend, who confirmed the statement of D'Artagnan. "But," he added, "in this war prisoners stand a chance of being hung."

"The deuce they do!" said Mousqueton; "I think I should like the siege of Rochelle better than this war then!"

Porthos, meantime, asked D'Artagnan to give him his instructions how to proceed on his journey.

"Four days," replied his friend, "are necessary to reach Blois; one day to rest there; three or four days to return to Paris. Set out, therefore, in a week, with your suite, and go to the Hotel de la Chevrette, Rue Tiquetonne, and wait for me there."

"That's agreed," said Porthos.

"As to myself, I shall go round to see Athos; for though I don't think his aid worth much, one must, with one's friends, observe all due politeness," said D'Artagnan.

The friends then took leave of each other on the very border of the estate of Pierrefonds, to which Porthos escorted his friend.

"At least," D'Artagnan said to himself, as he took the road to Villars-Cotterets, "at least I shall not be alone in my undertaking. That devil, Porthos, is a man of immense strength; still, if Athos, joins us, well—we shall be three of us to laugh at Aramis—that little coxcomb with his good luck."

At Villars-Cotterets he wrote to the cardinal:

MY LORD: I have already one man to offer to your eminence, and he is well worth twenty men. I am just setting out for Blois. The Comte de la Fère inhabits the castle of Bragelonne, in the environs of that city."

CHAPTER XIII.

TWO ANGELIC FACES.

THE road was long, but the horses upon which D'Artagnan and Planchet rode had been refreshed in the well-supplied stables of the Lord of Bracieux; the master and servant rode side by side, conversing as they went, for D'Artagnan had by degrees, thrown off the master, and Planchet had, entirely ceased to assume the manners of a servant. He had been

raised by circumstances to the rank of a confidant to his master. It was many years since D'Artagnan had opened his heart to any one; it happened, however, that these two men, on meeting again, assimilated perfectly. Planchet was, in truth, no vulgar companion in these new adventures; he was a man of good sense. Without seeking danger, he never shrank from an attack; in short, he had been a soldier, and arms ennoble a man; it was, therefore, on the footing of friends, that D'Artagnan and Planchet arrived in the neighborhood of Blois.

Going along, D'Artagnan, shaking his head, said:

"I know that my going to Athos is useless and absurd; but I owe this step to my old friend, a man who had in him materials for the most noble and generous of characters."

"Oh, Monsieur Athos was a noble gentleman," said Planchet, "was he not? Scattering money about him as heaven scatters hail. Do you remember, sir, that duel with the Englishman in the inclosure Des Carmes? Ah! how lofty, how magnificent Monsieur Athos was that day, when he said to his adversary, 'You have insisted on knowing my name, sir; so much the worse for you, since I shall be obliged to kill you.' I was near him, those were his exact words; when he stabbed his foe, as he said he would, and his adversary fell without saying, Oh! 'Tis a noble gentleman—Monsieur Athos."

"Yes, true as gospel," said D'Artagnan, "but one single fault has swallowed up all these fine qualities."

"I remember well," said Planchet—"he was fond of drinking—in truth he drank, but not as other men did. One seemed, as he raised the wine to his lips, to hear him say, 'Come, juice of the grape, and chase away my sorrows.' And how he used to break the stem of a glass, or the neck of a bottle! There was no one like him for that."

"And now," replied D'Artagnan, "behold the sad spectacle that awaits us. This noble gentleman, with his lofty glance, this handsome cavalier, so brilliant in feats of arms, that every one was surprised that he held in his hand a sword only instead of a baton of command! Alas! we shall find him changed into a bent-down old man, with red nose, and eyes that water; we shall find him extended on some lawn, whence he will look at us with a languid eye, and, perhaps, not recognize us. God knows, Planchet, that I should fly from a sight so sad, if I did not wish to show my respect for the illustrious shadow of what was once the Comte de la Fère, whom we loved so much."

Planchet shook his head and said nothing.

"And then," resumed D'Artagnan, to this decrepitude is probably added poverty—for he must have neglected the little that he had, and the dirty scoundrel, Grimaud, more taciturn than ever, and still more drunken than his master—stay, Planchet, all this breaks my heart to think of."

"I fancy myself there, and that I see him staggering and hear him stammering," said Planchet, in a piteous tone, "but at all events, we shall soon know the real state of things, for I think those lofty walls, reddened by the setting sun, are the walls of Blois."

"Probably; and yon steeples, pointed and sculptured, that we catch a glimpse of yonder, are like what I have heard described of Chambord."

At this moment one of those heavy wagons, drawn by bullocks, which carry the wood cut in the fine forests of the country to the ports of the Loire, came out of a by-road full of ruts, and turned on that which the two horsemen were following. A man carrying a long switch with a nail at the end of it, with which he urged on his slow team, was walking with the cart.

"Hol friend," cried Planchet.

"What's your pleasure, gentlemen?" replied the peasant, with a purity of accent peculiar to the people of that district, and which might have put to shame the polished dwellers near the Sorbonne and the Rue de l'Université.

"We are looking for the house of Monsieur de la Fère," said D'Artagnan.

The peasant took off his hat on hearing this revered name.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the wood that I am carting is his—I cut it in his copse, and am taking it to the château."

D'Artagnan determined not to question this man; he did not wish to hear from another what he had himself said to Planchet.

"The château," he said to himself; "what château? Ah, I understand: Athos is not a man to be thwarted; he has obliged his peasantry, as Porthos has done his, to call him 'my lord,' and to call his paltry place a château. He had a heavy hand—that dear Athos—after drinking."

D'Artagnan, after asking the man the right way, continued his route, agitated, in spite of himself, at the idea of seeing once more that singular man whom he had so truly loved, and who had contributed so much by his advice and example to his education as a gentleman. He slackened the pace of his horse, and went on, his head drooping as if in deep thought.

Soon as the road turned, the Château de la Vallière appeared in view, then, a quarter of a mile further, a white house, encircled in sycamores, was visible at the further end of a group of trees, which spring had powdered with a snow of flowers.

On beholding this house, D'Artagnan, calm as he was in general, felt an unusual disturbance within his heart—so powerful during the whole course of his life were the recollections of his youth. He proceeded, nevertheless, and came opposite to an iron gate, ornamented in the taste which marked the works of that period.

Through the gate were seen kitchen-gardens, carefully attended to, a spacious courtyard, in which neighed several horses held by valets in various liveries, and a carriage drawn by two horses of the country.

"We are mistaken," said D'Artagnan; "this cannot be the house of Athos. Good heavens! suppose he is dead, and that this property now belongs to some one who bears his name. Alight, Planchet, and inquire, for I confess I have not courage to do so."

Planchet alighted.

"Thou must add," said D'Artagnan, "that a gentleman who is passing by wishes to have the honor of paying his respects to the Comte de la Fère, and if thou art satisfied with what thou hearest, then mention my name!"

Planchet obeyed these instructions. An old servant opened the door and took in the message which D'Artagnan had ordered Planchet to deliver, in case that his servant was satisfied that this was the Comte de la Fère whom they sought. While Planchet was standing on the steps before the house he heard a voice say:

"Well, where is this gentleman, and why do they not bring him here?"

This voice—the sound of which reached D'Artagnan—re-awakened in his heart a thousand sentiments, a thousand remembrances that he had forgotten. He sprang hastily from his horse, while Planchet, with a smile on his lips, was advancing toward the master of the house.

"But I know him—I know the lad yonder," said Athos, appearing on the threshold.

"Oh, yes—Monsieur le Comte, you know me, and I know you. I am Planchet—Planchet, whom you know well." But the honest servant could say no more, so much was he overcome by this unexpected interview.

"What, Planchet, is Monsieur D'Artagnan here?"

"Here I am, my friend, dear Athos?" cried D'Artagnan in a faltering voice, and almost staggering from agitation.

At these words a visible emotion was expressed on the beautiful countenance and calm features of Athos. He rushed toward D'Artagnan, with his eyes fixed upon him, and clasped him in his arms. D'Artagnan, equally moved, pressed him also closely to him, while tears stood in his eyes. Athos then took him by the hand and led him into the drawing-room, where there were several people. Every one rose.

"I present to you," he said, "Monsieur le Chevalier D'Artagnan, lieutenant of his majesty's musketeers, a devoted friend, and one of the most excellent and brave gentlemen that I have ever known."

D'Artagnan received the compliments of those who were present in his own way; and while the conversation became general, he looked earnestly at Athos.

Strange! Athos was scarcely aged at all! His fine eyes, no longer surrounded by that dark line which nights of dissipation draw round them, seemed larger and more liquid than ever. His face, a little elongated, had gained in calm dignity what it had lost in feverish excitement. His hand, always wonderfully beautiful and strong, was set off by a ruffle of lace, like certain hands by Titian and Vandyck. He was less stiff than formerly. His long dark hair, scattered here and there with gray locks, fell elegantly over his shoulders with a wavy curl; his voice was still youthful, as if at only twenty-five years old; and his magnificent teeth, which he had preserved white and sound, gave an indescribable charm to his smile.

Meanwhile, the guests, seeing that the two friends were longing to be alone, prepared to depart, when a noise of dogs barking resounded through the courtyard, and many persons said, at the same moment:

"Ah! 'tis Raoul who is come home."

Athos, as the name of Raoul was pronounced, looked inquisitively at D'Artagnan, in order to see if any curiosity was painted on his face. But D'Artagnan was still in confusion, and turned round almost mechanically, when a fine young man of fifteen years of age, dressed simply, but in perfect taste, entered the room, raising, as he came, his hat adorned with a long plume of red feathers.

Nevertheless, D'Artagnan was struck by the appearance of this new personage. It seemed to explain to him the change in Athos; a resemblance between the boy and the man

explained the mystery of this regenerated existence. He remained listening and gazing.

"Here you are, home again, Raoul," said the Comte.

"Yes, sir," replied the youth, with deep respect, "and I have performed the commission that you gave me."

"But what's the matter, Raoul?" said Athos, very anxiously. "You are pale and agitated."

"Sir," replied the young man; "it is on account of an accident which has happened to our little neighbor."

"To Mademoiselle de la Vallière?" asked Athos quickly.

"What is it?" asked many persons present.

"She was walking with her nurse, Marceline, in the place where the woodmen cut the wood, when, passing on horseback, I stopped. She saw me also, and in trying to jump from the end of a pile of wood on which she had mounted, the poor child fell, and was not able to rise again. She has, I fear, sprained her ankle."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Athos. "And her mother, Madame de Saint-Remy, have they told her of it?"

"No, sir; Madame de Saint-Remy is at Blois, with the Duchess of Orleans. I am afraid that what was first done was unskillful and useless. I am come, sir, to ask your advice."

"Send directly to Blois, Raoul; or rather take your horse, and ride there yourself."

Raoul bowed.

"But where is Louisa?" asked the comte.

"I have brought her here, sir, and I have deposited her in the charge of Charlotte, who, till better advice comes, has put the foot into iced water."

The guests now all took leave of Athos, excepting the old Duke de Barbé, who, as an old friend of the family of La Vallière, went to see little Louisa, and offered to take her to Blois in his carriage.

"You are right, sir," said Athos. "She will be better with her mother. As for you, Raoul, I am sure it is your fault; some giddiness or folly."

"No, sir, I assure you," muttered Raoul, "it is not."

"Oh, no, no, I declare it is not!" cried the young girl, while Raoul turned pale at the idea of his being, perhaps, the cause of her disaster.

"Nevertheless, Raoul, you must go to Blois, and you must make your excuses and mine to Madame de Saint-Remy."

The youth looked pleased. He again took in his strong arms the little girl, whose pretty golden head and smiling

face rested on his shoulder, and placed her gently in the carriage; then, jumping on his horse with the elegance and agility of a first-rate esquire, after bowing to Athos and D'Artagnan, he went off close by the door of the carriage, in the inside of which his eyes were incessantly riveted.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CASTLE OF BRAGELONNE.

WHILE this scene was going on, D'Artagnan remained with open mouth and a confused gaze. Everything had turned out so differently to what he expected, that he was stupefied with wonder.

Athos, who had been observing him and guessing his thoughts, took his arm, and led him into the garden.

"While supper is being prepared," he said, smiling, "you will not, my friend be sorry to have the mystery which so puzzles you cleared up."

"True, Monsieur le Comte," replied D'Artagnan, who felt that by degrees Athos was resuming that great influence which aristocracy had over him.

Athos smiled.

"First and foremost, dear D'Artagnan, we have no title such as count here. When I call you 'chevalier,' it is in presenting you to my guests, that they may know who you are. But to you, D'Artagnan, I am, I hope, still dear Athos, your comrade, your friend. Do you intend to be ceremonious because you are less attached to me than you were?"

"Oh! God forbid!"

"Then let us be as we used to be; let us be open to each other. You are surprised at what you see here?"

"Extremely."

"But above all things, I am a marvel to you?"

"I confess it."

"I am still young, am I not? Should you not have known me again, in spite of my eight-and-forty years of age?"

"On the contrary, I do not find you the same person at all."

"Ah, I understand," cried Athos, with a slight blush.

"Everything, D'Artagnan, even folly, has its limit."

"Then your means, it appears, are improved; you have a

capital house, your own, I presume? You have a park, horses, servants."

Athos smiled.

"Yes; I inherited this little property when I quitted the army, as I told you. The park is twenty acres—twenty, comprising kitchen-gardens and a common. I have two horses—I don't count my servant's short-tailed nag. My sporting dogs consist of two pointers, two harriers, and two setters. And then all this extravagance is not for myself," added Athos, laughing.

"Yes, I see, for the young man Raoul," said D'Artagnan.

"You guess right, my friend; this youth is an orphan, deserted by his mother, who left him in the house of a poor country priest. I have brought him up. It is he who has worked in me the change you see; I was dried up like a miserable tree, isolated, attached to nothing on earth; it was only a deep affection which could make me take root again, and bind me to life. This child has caused me to recover what I had lost. I had no longer any wish to live for myself. I have lived for him. I have corrected the vices that I had. I have assumed the virtues that I had not. Precept is much, example is more. I may be mistaken, but I believe that Raoul will be as accomplished a gentleman as our degenerate age could display."

The remembrance of *my lady* recurred to D'Artagnan.

"And you are happy?" he said to his friend.

"As happy as it is allowed to one of God's creatures to be on this earth; but say out all you think, D'Artagnan, for you have not done so."

"You are too bad, Athos; one can hide nothing from you," answered D'Artagnan. "I wished to ask you if you ever feel any emotions of terror resembling——"

"Remorse! I finish your phrase—yes and no. I do not feel remorse, because that woman, I believe, deserved her punishment. I do not feel remorse, because, had we allowed her to live, she would have persisted in her work of destruction. But I do not mean, my friend, that we were right in what we did. Perhaps all blood that is shed demands an expiation. Hers has been accomplished; it remains, possibly, for us to accomplish ours."

"I have sometimes thought as you do, Athos."

"She had a son, that unhappy woman?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever heard of him?"

"Never."

"He must be about twenty-three years of age," said Athos, in a low tone. "I often think of that young man, D'Artagnan."

"Strange! for I had forgotten him," said the lieutenant. Athos smiled—the smile was melancholy.

"And Lord de Winter—do you know anything about him?"

"I know that he is in high favor with Charles I."

"The fortunes of that monarch are now at a low ebb. He shed the blood of Strafford: that confirms what I said just now—blood will have blood: and the queen?"

"Henrietta of England is at the Louvre?"

"Yes, and I hear in the greatest poverty. Her daughter, during the bitterest cold, was obliged, for want of fire, to remain in bed. Why did she not ask from any one of us a home instead of from Mazarin? She should have wanted for nothing."

"Have you ever seen the Queen of England?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"No, but my mother, as a child, saw her. My mother was maid of honor to Marie de Medici."

At this instant they heard the sound of horses' feet.

"'Tis Raoul, who is come back," said Athos; "and we can now hear how the poor child is. Well," he added, "I hope the accident has been of no consequence?"

"They don't yet know, sir, on account of the swelling; but the doctor is afraid some muscle may be injured."

At this moment a little boy, half-peasant, half-footboy, came to announce supper.

Athos led his guest into a dining-room of moderate size, the windows of which opened on one side on a garden—on the other on a hothouse, full of magnificent flowers.

D'Artagnan glanced at the dinner-service. The plate was magnificent, old, and belonging to the family. D'Artagnan stopped to look at a sideboard, on which was a superb ewer of silver.

"That workmanship is divine!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, a *chef-d'œuvre* of the great Florentine sculptor, Benvenuto Cellini," replied Athos.

"What battle does it represent?"

"That of Marignan, just at the point where one of my forefathers is offering his sword to Francis I., who had broken his. It was on that occasion that my ancestor, Emguerrand de la Fère was made a knight of the order of St. Michael; besides which the king, fifteen years afterward, gave him

also this ewer, and a sword which you may have seen formerly in my house, also a beautiful specimen of workmanship. Men were giants in those times," said Athos; "now we are pigmies in comparison. Let us sit down to supper. Call Charles," he added, addressing the boy who waited.

"My good Charles, I particularly recommend to your care Planchet, the '*laquais*' of Monsieur D'Artagnan. He likes good wine; now you have the key of the cellar—he has slept a long time on a hard bed, so he won't object to a soft one—take care of him, I beg of you." Charles bowed and retired.

"You think of everything," said D'Artagnan; "and I thank you for Planchet, my dear Athos."

Raoul stared on hearing this name, and looked at the count to be quite sure that it was he whom the lieutenant thus addressed.

"That name sounds strange to you," said Athos, smiling; "it was my '*nom de guerre*,' when Monsieur D'Artagnan, two other gallant friends, and myself performed some feats of arms at the siege of La Rochelle, under the deceased cardinal and Monsieur de Bassompierre. My friend is still so kind as to address me by that old and dear appellation, which makes my heart glad when I hear it."

"'Tis an illustrious name," said the lieutenant, "and had one day triumphal honors paid to it."

"What do you mean, sir?" inquired Raoul.

"You have not forgotten Saint Gervais, Athos, and the napkin which was converted into a banner;" and he then related to Raoul the story of the bastion, and Raoul fancied he was listening to one of those deeds of arms belonging to days of chivalry, and recounted by Tasso and Ariosto.

"D'Artagnan does not tell you, Raoul," said Athos, in his turn, "that he was reckoned one of the best swordsmen of his time—a knuckle of iron, a wrist of steel, a sure eye, and a glance of fire—that's what his adversary met with from him. He was eighteen, only three years older than you are, Raoul, when I saw him at this work—pitted against tried men."

"And was Monsieur D'Artagnan the conqueror?" said the young man, with glistening eyes.

"I killed one man, I believe," replied D'Artagnan, with a look of inquiry directed to Athos; "another I disarmed, or wounded. I don't remember which——"

"Wounded," said Athos; "oh! you were a strong one."

The young man would willingly have prolonged this conversation all night, but Athos pointed out to him that his guest must need repose. D'Artagnan would fain have de-

clared that he was not fatigued; but Athos insisted on his retiring to his chamber, conducted thither by Raoul.

CHAPTER XV.

ATHOS AS A DIPLOMATIST.

D'ARTAGNAN retired to bed—not to sleep, but to think over all that he had heard that evening. As he was good-hearted, and had once had for Athos a liking, which had grown into a sincere friendship, he was delighted at thus meeting a man full of intelligence and of moral strength, instead of a wretched drunkard. He admitted, without annoyance, the continued superiority of Athos over himself, devoid as he was of that jealousy which might have saddened a less generous disposition: he was delighted also that the high qualities of Athos appeared to promise favorably for his mission. Nevertheless, it seemed to him that Athos was not, in all respects, sincere and frank. Who was the youth whom he had adopted, and bore so great a resemblance to him? What could explain Athos' having re-entered the world, and the extreme sobriety which he had observed at table? The absence of Grimaud, whose name had never once been uttered by Athos, gave D'Artagnan uneasiness. It was evident either that he no longer possessed the confidence of his friend, or that Athos was bound by some invisible chain, or that he had been forewarned of the lieutenant's visit.

He could not help thinking of M. Rochefort, whom he had seen in Nôtre Dame;—could De Rochefort have preceded him with Athos? Again, the moderate fortune which Athos possessed, concealed, as it was, so skillfully, seemed to show a regard for appearances, and to betray a latent ambition, which might be easily aroused. The clear and vigorous intellect of Athos would render him more open to conviction than a less able man would be. He would enter into the minister's schemes with the more ardor because his natural activity would be doubled by a dose of necessity.

Resolved to seek an explanation on all these points on the following day, D'Artagnan, in spite of his fatigue, prepared for an attack, and determined that it should take place after breakfast. He determined to cultivate the good will of the youth Raoul, and, either while fencing with him, or in shooting, to extract from his simplicity some information which would connect the Athos of old times with the Athos of the

present. But D'Artagnan, at the same time, being a man of extreme caution, was quite aware what injury he should do himself, if, by any indiscretion or awkwardness, he should betray his maneuvering to the experienced eye of Athos. Besides, to say the truth, while D'Artagnan was quite disposed to adopt a subtle course against the cunning of Aramis, or the vanity of Porthos, he was ashamed to equivocate with Athos, the true-hearted, open Athos. It seemed to him that if Porthos and Aramis deemed him superior to them in the arts of diplomacy, they would like him all the better for it, but that Athos, on the contrary, would despise him.

"Ah! why is not Grimaud, the taciturn Grimaud, here?" thought D'Artagnan; "there are things which his silence would have shown me—his silence was eloquence!"

There was now a perfect stillness in the house. D'Artagnan had heard the doors shut, and the shutters barred; then the dogs became, in their turn, silent. At last, a nightingale, lost in a thicket of shrubs, had dropped off in the midst of its most melodious cadences, and fallen asleep. Not a single sound was heard in the castle, except that of a footstep, up and down in the chamber above—as he supposed, the bedroom of Athos.

"He is walking about, and thinking," thought D'Artagnan, "but of what? It is impossible to know; everything else might be guessed, but not that."

At length Athos went to bed, apparently, for the noise ceased.

Silence, and fatigue together, overcame D'Artagnan, and sleep overtook him also. He was not, however, a good sleeper. Scarcely had dawn gilded his window-curtains, than he sprung out of bed, and opened the windows. Somebody, he perceived, was in the courtyard, but moving stealthily. True to his custom of never passing anything over that it was within his power to know, D'Artagnan looked out of the window, and perceived the close red coat and brown hair of Raoul.

The young man was opening the door of the stable. He then, with noiseless haste, took out the horse that he had ridden on the previous evening, saddled and bridled it himself, and led the animal into the alley to the right of the kitchen-garden, opened a side-door which conducted him to a bridle-road, shut it after him, and D'Artagnan saw him pass by like a dart, bending, as he went, beneath pendant flowery branches of the maple trees and acacias. The road, as D'Artagnan had observed, was the way to Blois.

"So!" thought the Gascon, "here's a young blade who has already his love affair, who doesn't at all agree with Athos in his hatred to the fair sex. He's not going to hunt, for he has neither dogs nor arms; he's not going on a message, for he goes secretly. Why does he go in secret? Is he afraid of me, or of his father? for I am sure the count is his father. By Jove! I shall know about that soon, for I shall speak out to Athos."

Day was now advanced: all the noises that had ceased the night before were reawakened, one after the other. The bird in the branches, the dog in his kennel, the sheep in the field, the boats which were moored in the Loire, even, seemed to be animated, and, leaving the shore, to abandon themselves to the current of the stream. The Gascon gave a last twist to his mustache, a last turn to his hair, brushed, from habit, the brim of his hat with the sleeve of his doublet, and went downstairs. Scarcely had he descended the last step of the threshold than he saw Athos, bent down toward the ground, as if he were looking for a crown-piece in the dust.

"Good-morning, my dear host," cried D'Artagnan.

"Good-day to you; have you slept well?"

"Excellently well, Athos; but what are you looking for? you are, perhaps, a tulip fancier?"

"My dear friend, if I were, you should not laugh at me for being so. In the country, people alter; one gets to like, without knowing it, all those beautiful objects that God causes to spring from the bottom of the earth, and which are despised in cities. I was looking anxiously for some iris roots which I planted here, close to this reservoir, and which some one has trampled upon this morning. These gardeners are the most careless people in the world: in bringing the horse out of the water, they've allowed him to walk over the border."

D'Artagnan began to smile.

"Ah! you think so, do you?"

And he took his friend along the alley, where a number of tracks, like those which had trampled down the flower-beds, were visible.

"Here are the horse's hoofs again, it seems, Athos," he said carelessly.

"Yes, indeed; the marks are recent."

"Quite so," replied the lieutenant.

"Who went out this morning?" Athos asked uneasily.

"Has any horse got loose from the stable?"

"Not likely," answered the Gascon; "these marks are regular."

"Where is Raoul?" asked Athos; "how is it that I have not seen him?"

"Hush!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, putting his finger on his lips; and he related what he had seen, watching Athos all the while.

"Ah! he's gone to Blois; the poor boy——"

"To do what?"

"Ah! to inquire after little La Vallière; she has sprained her foot, you know."

"You think he is?"

"I am sure of it," said Athos; "don't you see that Raoul is in love?"

"Indeed! with whom? with a child of seven years old?"

"Dear friend, at Raoul's age the heart is so ardent that it must expand toward some object or another, fancied or real; well, his love is half one—half the other. She is the prettiest little creature in the world, with flaxen hair, blue eyes—at once saucy and languishing."

"But what say you to Raoul's fancy?"

"Nothing; I laugh at Raoul; but this first desire of the heart is imperious. I remember, just at his age, how in love I was with a Grecian statue, which our good king, then Henry IV., gave my father, insomuch that I was mad with grief when they told me that the story of Pygmalion was nothing but a fable."

"'Tis want of occupation; you do not make Raoul work, so he takes his own way of employing himself."

"Exactly so; therefore I think of sending him away from this place."

"You will be wise to do so."

"No doubt of it; but it will break his heart. So long as three or four years ago, he used to adorn and adore his little idol, whom he will some day fall in love with in good earnest, if he remains here. The parents of little La Vallière have for a long time perceived, and been amused at it; but now they begin to look grave about it."

"Nonsense! however, Raoul must be diverted from this fancy; send him away, or you will never make a man of him."

"I think I shall send him to Paris."

"So!" thought D'Artagnan; and it seemed to him that the moment for attack had arrived.

"Suppose," he said, "we chalk out a career for this young man. I want to consult you about something."

"Do so."

"Do you think it is time to enter into the service?"

"But are you not still in the service? you—D'Artagnan?"

"I mean into active service. Our former life—has it still no attractions for you? should you not be happy to begin anew in my society, and in that of Porthos, the exploits of our youth?"

"Do you propose to me to do so, D'Artagnan?"

"Decidedly and honestly."

"On whose side?" asked Athos, fixing his clear benevolent glance on the countenance of the Gascon.

"Ah! devil take it, you speak in earnest——"

"And must have a definite answer. Listen, D'Artagnan. There is but one person—or rather, one cause—to whom a man like me can be useful—that of the king."

"Exactly," answered the musketeer.

"Yes, but let us understand each other," returned Athos seriously. "If by the cause of the king you mean that of Monsieur de Mazarin, we do *not* understand each other."

"I don't say, exactly," answered the Gascon, confused.

"Come, D'Artagnan, don't let us play a cunning game; your hesitation, your evasion, tell me at once on whose side you are; for that party no one dares openly to recruit, and when people recruit for it, it is with a downcast head and low voice."

"Ah, my dear Athos!"

"You know that I am not alluding to you; you are the pearl of brave and bold men. I speak of that spiteful and intriguing Italian—of the pedant who has tried to put on his own head a crown which he stole from under a pillow—of the scoundrel who calls his party the party of the king—who wants to send the princes of the blood to prison, not daring to kill them, as our great cardinal—our cardinal did—of the miser who weighs his gold pieces, and keeps the clipped ones for fear, though he is rich, of losing them at play next morning—of the impudent fellow who insults the queen, as they say—so much the worse for her—and who is going, in three months, to make war upon us, in order that he may retain his pensions—is that the master whom you propose to me? Thanks, D'Artagnan."

"You are more impetuous than you were," returned D'Artagnan. "Age has warmed, not chilled your blood. Who told you that that was the master I proposed to you? Devil take it," he muttered to himself, "don't let me betray my secrets to a man not inclined to receive them well."

"Well, then," said Athos, "what are your schemes? what do you propose?"

"Zounds! nothing can be more natural; you live on your estate, happy in your golden mediocrity. Porthos has, perhaps, sixty thousand francs income. Aramis has always fifty duchesses who are quarreling for the priest, as they quarreled formerly for the musketeer; but I—what have I in the world? I have worn my cuirass for these twenty years, kept down in this inferior rank, without going forwarder or backwarder, without living. In fact, I am dead. Well! when there is some idea of being resuscitated—you say he's a scoundrel—an impudent fellow—a miser—a bad master! By Jove! I'm of your opinion; but find me a better one, or give me the means of living."

Athos was for a few moments thoughtful.

"Good! D'Artagnan is for Mazarin," he said to himself.

From that moment he became very guarded.

On his side D'Artagnan was more cautious also.

"You spoke to me," Athos resumed, "of Porthos; have you persuaded him to seek his fortune? but he has wealth, I believe, already?"

"Doubtless he has; but such is man, that he always wants something."

"What does Porthos wish for?"

"To be a baron."

"Ah! true! I forgot," said Athos, laughing.

"'Tis true!" thought the Gascon, "where has he heard it? Does he correspond with Aramis? Ah! if I knew that he did, I should know all."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Raoul.

"Is our little neighbor worse?" asked Athos, seeing a look of vexation on the face of the youth.

"Ah, sir!" replied Raoul, "her fall is a very serious one; and without any apparent injury, the physician fears that she will be lame for life."

"That is terrible," said Athos.

"And what makes me wretched, sir, is that I am the cause of this misfortune."

"There's only one remedy, dear Raoul—that is, to marry her as a compensation," remarked D'Artagnan.

"Ah, sir!" answered Raoul, "you joke about a real misfortune; that is cruel, indeed."

The good understanding between the two friends was not in the least altered by the morning's skirmish. They breakfasted with a good appetite, looking now and then at poor Raoul, who, with moist eyes and a full heart, scarcely ate at all.

After breakfast two letters arrived for Athos, who read them with deep attention; while D'Artagnan could not restrain himself from jumping up several times, on seeing him read these epistles, in one of which, having a very strong light, he perceived the fine writing of Aramis. The other was in a feminine hand, long and crossed.

"Come," said D'Artagnan to Raoul—seeing that Athos wished to be alone—"come, let us take a turn in the fencing-gallery; that will amuse you."

And they both went into a low room, where there were foils, gloves, masques, breast-plates, and all the accessories for a fencing match.

In a quarter of an hour Athos joined them; and, at the same moment, Charles brought in a letter for D'Artagnan, which a messenger had just desired might be instantly delivered.

It was now the turn of Athos to take a sly look.

D'Artagnan read the letter with apparent calmness, and said, shaking his head—

"See, dear friend, what the army is; my faith, you are, indeed, right not to return to it. Monsieur de Tréville is ill—so my company can't do without me; there! my leave is at an end!"

"Do you go back to Paris?" asked Athos quickly.

"Egad! yes; but why don't you come there also?"

Athos colored a little, and answered:

"Should I go, I shall be delighted to see you there."

"Halloo, Planchet!" cried the Gascon from the door, "we must set out in ten minutes; give the horses some hay."

Then turning to Athos, he added:

"I seem to miss something here. I am really sorry to go away without having seen Grimaud."

"Grimaud!" replied Athos. "I'm surprised you have never asked after him. I have lent him to a friend——"

"Who will understand the signs he makes," returned D'Artagnan.

"I hope so."

The friends embraced cordially; D'Artagnan pressed Raoul's hand.

"Will you not come with me?" he said; "I shall pass by Blois."

Raoul turned toward Athos, who showed him by a secret sign that he did not wish him to go.

"Adieu, then, to both, my good friends," said D'Artagnan; "may God preserve you! as we used to say when we said good-by to each other in the late cardinal's time."

Athos waved his hand, Raoul bowed, and D'Artagnan and Planchet set out.

The count followed them with his eyes—his hands resting on the shoulders of the youth, whose height was almost equal to his own; but, as soon as they were out of sight, he said:

"Raoul—we set out to-night for Paris."

"How!" cried the young man, turning pale.

"You may go and offer your adieux and mine to Madame de Saint-Remy. I shall wait for you here till seven."

The young man bent low, with an expression of sorrow and gratitude mingled, and retired, in order to saddle his horse.

As to D'Artagnan, scarcely, on his side, was he out of sight, than he drew from his pocket a letter, which he read over again.

"Return immediately to Paris.—T. M."

"The epistle is laconic," said D'Artagnan; "and if there had not been a postscript, probably I should not have understood it; but, happily, there is a postscript."

And he read that famous postscript, which made him forget the abruptness of the letter.

"P. S. Go to the king's treasurer at Blois; tell him your name, and show him this letter, you will receive two hundred pistoles."

"Assuredly," said D'Artagnan; "I like this piece of prose, and the cardinal writes better than I thought. Come, Planchet, let us pay a visit to the king's treasurer, and then set off."

"Toward Paris, sir?"

"Toward Paris."

And both set out on as hard a trot as their horses could go.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUC DE BEAUFORT.

THE circumstances which had hastened the return of D'Artagnan to Paris were the following:

One evening, when Mazarin, according to custom, went to visit the queen, in passing the guard-chamber he heard loud voices there; wishing to know on what the soldiers were conversing, he approached, with his wonted stealthy and wolf-like step—pushed open the door, and put his head close to the chink.

There was a dispute among the guards.

"I tell you," one of them was saying, "that if Coysel predicted that, 'tis as good as true; I know nothing about it, but I've heard say that he's not only an astrologer, but a magician."

"Deuce take it, friend—if he's one of thy friends, thou wilt ruin him in saying so."

"Why?"

"Because he may be tried for it."

"Ah! absurd! they don't burn sorcerers nowadays."

"No? 'Tis not a long time since the late cardinal burnt Urban Grandier though."

"My friend, Urban Grandier wasn't a sorcerer; he was a learned man. He didn't predict the future; he knew the past—often a much worse thing."

Mazarin nodded an assent; but wishing to know what the prediction was about which they disputed, he remained in the same place.

"I don't say," resumed the guard, "that Coysel is not a sorcerer—but I say that if his prophecy gets wind, it's a sure way to prevent its coming true."

"How so?"

"Why, in this way—if Coysel says, loud enough for the cardinal to hear him, on such or such a day such a prisoner will escape, 'tis plain that the cardinal will take measures of precaution, and that the prisoner will not escape."

"Good Lord!" said another guard, who appeared asleep on a bench, but who had not lost a syllable of the conversation, "do you suppose that men can escape their destiny? If it is written yonder, in heaven, that the Duc de Beaufort is to escape, he will escape; and all the precautions of the cardinal will not hinder it."

Mazarin started. He was an Italian, and therefore superstitious. He walked straight into the midst of the guards, who, on seeing him, were silent.

"What were you saying?" he asked, with his flattering manner, "that Monsieur de Beaufort had escaped—did you not?"

"Oh, no, my lord!" said the incredulous soldier. "He's well guarded now; we said, only, that he would escape."

"Who said so?"

"Repeat your story, Saint Laurent," replied the man, turning to the originator of the tale.

"My lord," said the guard, "I have simply mentioned the prophecy that I heard from a man named Coysel, who be-

lieves that be he ever so closely guarded, the Duke of Beaufort will escape before Whitsuntide."

"Coysel is a madman!" returned the cardinal.

"No," replied the soldier, tenacious in his credulity; "he has foretold many things that have come to pass—for instance, that the queen would have a son; that Monsieur de Coligny would be killed in a duel with the Duc de Guise; and finally, that the coadjutor would be made cardinal. Well! the queen has not only one son, but two; then, Monsieur de Coligny was killed, and——"

"Yes," said Mazarin; "but the coadjutor is not yet made a cardinal."

"No, my lord—but he will be," answered the guard.

Mazarin made a grimace, as if he meant to say—"But he does not yet wear the cardinal's cap;" then he added:

"So, my friend, it's your opinion that Monsieur de Beaufort will escape?"

"That's my idea, my lord; and if your eminence were to offer to make me at this moment governor of the castle of Vincennes, I should refuse it. After Whitsuntide it would be another thing."

There is nothing so convincing as a firm conviction. It has an effect upon the most incredulous; and, far from being incredulous, Mazarin was superstitious. He went away thoughtful and anxious, and returned to his own room, where he summoned Bernouin, and desired him to fetch there the next morning the special guard whom he had placed near Monsieur de Beaufort, and to awaken him whenever he should arrive on the following morning.

The guard had, in fact, touched the cardinal in the tenderest point. During the whole five years in which the Duc de Beaufort had been in prison, not a day had passed in which the cardinal had not felt a secret dread of his escape. It was not possible, as he knew well, to confine for the whole of his life the grandson of Henry IV., especially when this young prince was scarcely thirty years of age. But, however and whensoever he did escape, what hatred he must have cherished against him to whom he owed his long imprisonment; who had taken him rich, brave, glorious, beloved by women, feared by men, to cast off from his life its happiest years; for it is not existence, it is merely life, in prison. Meantime, Mazarin redoubled the surveillance over the duke. But, like the miser in the fable, he could not sleep near his treasure. Often he awoke in the night, suddenly, dreaming that he had been robbed of Monsieur de Beaufort. Then he

inquired about him, and had the vexation of hearing that the prisoner played, drank, sang—but that while playing, drinking, singing, he often stopped short, to vow that Mazarin should pay dear for all the amusements which he had forced him to enter into at Vincennes.

So much did this one idea haunt the cardinal, even in his sleep, that when, at seven in the morning, Bernouin came to arouse him, his first words were: "Well—what's the matter? Has Monsieur de Beaufort escaped from Vincennes?"

"I do not think so, my lord," said Bernouin; "but you will hear about him, for La Ramée is here, and awaits the commands of your eminence."

"Tell him to come in," said Mazarin, arranging his pillows, so that he might receive him sitting, in bed.

The officer entered—a large fat man, with a good physiognomy. His air of perfect serenity made Mazarin uneasy.

"Approach, sir," said the cardinal.

The officer obeyed.

"Do you know what they are saying here?"

"No, your eminence."

"Well, they say that Monsieur de Beaufort is going to escape from Vincennes, if he has not done so already."

The officer's face expressed complete stupefaction. He opened, at once his great eyes and his little mouth, to inhale better the joke that his eminence deigned to address to him, and ended by a burst of laughter, so violent, that his great limbs shook in his hilarity as they would have done in a fever.

"Escape! my lord—escape! Your eminence does not then know where Monsieur de Beaufort is?"

"Yes, I do, sir; in the donjon of Vincennes."

"Yes, sir; in a room, the walls of which are seven feet thick, with grated windows, each bar being as thick as my arm."

"Sir," replied Mazarin, "with perseverance one may penetrate through a wall—with a watch-spring one may saw through an iron bar."

"Then my lord does not know that there are eight guards about him—four in his chamber, four in the antechamber—and they never leave him."

"But he leaves the room, he plays at tennis at the Mall?"

"Sir, those amusements are allowed; but if your eminence wishes it, we will discontinue the permission."

"No, no," cried Mazarin, fearing that should his prisoner ever leave his prison he would be the more exasperated against

him, if he thus retrenched his amusements—he then asked with whom he played.

“My lord—either with the officers of the guard, with the other prisoners, or with me.”

“Hum,” said the cardinal, beginning to feel more comfortable. “You mean to say, then, my dear Monsieur la Ramée——”

“That unless Monsieur de Beaufort can contrive to metamorphose himself into a little bird, I answer for him.”

“Take care—you assert a great deal,” said Mazarin. “M. de Beaufort told the guards who took him to Vincennes, that he had often thought what he should do in case he were put into prison, and that he had found out forty ways of escaping.”

“My lord—if among these forty there had been one good way, he would have been out long ago.”

“Come, come; not such a fool as I fancied!” thought Mazarin. “But when you leave him, for instance?”

“Oh! when I leave him! I have in my stead a bold fellow who aspires to be his majesty’s special guard. I promise you, he keeps a good watch over the prisoner. During the three weeks that he has been with me, I have only had to reproach him with one thing—being too severe with the prisoners.”

“And who is this Cerberus?”

“A certain Monsieur Grimaud, my lord.”

“And what was he before he went to Vincennes?”

“He was in the country, as I was told by the person who recommended him to me.”

“And who recommended this man to you?”

“The steward of the Duc de Grammont.”

“He is not a gossip, I hope?”

“Lord a-mercy, my lord! I thought for a long time that he was dumb; he answers only by signs. It seems his former master accustomed him to that. The fact is, I fancy he got into some trouble in the country from his stupidity, and that he wouldn’t be sorry in the royal livery to find impunity.”

“Well, dear Monsieur la Ramée,” replied the cardinal, “let him prove a firm and faithful keeper, and we will shut our eyes upon his rural misdeeds, and put on his back a uniform to make him respectable, and in the pockets of that uniform some pistoles to drink to the king’s health.”

Mazarin was large in his promises—quite different to the virtuous Monsieur Grimaud, so be-praised by La Ramée; for he said nothing, and did much.

It was now nine o’clock. The cardinal, therefore, got up,

perfumed himself, dressed, and went to the queen to tell her what had detained him. The queen, who was scarcely more afraid of Monsieur de Beaufort than she was of the cardinal himself, and who was almost as superstitious as he was, made him repeat word for word all La Ramée's praises of his deputy. Then, when the cardinal had ended:

"Alas! sir! why have we not a Grimaud near every prince?"

"Patience!" replied Mazarin, with his Italian smile; "that may happen one day; but in the meantime——"

"Well! in the meantime?"

"I shall take precautions."

And he wrote to D'Artagnan to hasten his return.

CHAPTER XVII.

DESCRIBES HOW THE DUC DE BEAUFORT AMUSED HIS LEISURE HOURS IN THE DONJON OF VINCENNES.

THE captive, who was the source of so much alarm to the cardinal, and whose means of escape disturbed the repose of the whole court, was wholly unconscious of the terrors which he caused in the Palais Royal.

He had found himself so strictly guarded, that he soon perceived the fruitlessness of any attempt at escape. His vengeance, therefore, consisted in uttering curses on the head of Mazarin; he even tried to make some verses on him, but soon gave up the attempt. For Monsieur de Beaufort had not only not received from heaven the gift of versifying, but he had even the greatest possible difficulty in expressing himself in prose.

The duke was the grandson of Henry IV. and of Gabrielle d'Estrées—as good-natured, as brave, as proud, and, above all, as Gascon as his ancestor, but less educated. After having been for some time, after the death of Louis XIII., the favorite, the confidant, the first man in short, at the court, he had been obliged to yield his place to Mazarin, and he became the second in influence and favor; and, eventually, as he was stupid enough to be vexed at this change of position, the queen had had him arrested, and sent to Vincennes, in charge of Guitant, who made his appearance in these pages in the beginning of this history, and whom we shall see again. By the queen, means by Mazarin.

During the five years of his seclusion, which would have improved and matured the intellect of any other man, M. de

Beaufort, had he not affected to brave the cardinal, to despise princes, and to walk alone, without adherents or disciples, would either have regained his liberty, or made partisans. But these considerations never occurred to the duke, and every day the cardinal received fresh accounts of him, which were as unpleasant as possible to the minister.

After having failed in poetry, Monsieur de Beaufort tried drawing. He drew portraits with a piece of coal, of the cardinal; and as his talents did not enable him to produce a very good likeness, he wrote under the picture, that there might be no doubt of the original—"Portrait of the Illustrious Coxcumb Mazarin." Monsieur de Chavigny, the governor of Vincennes, waited upon the duke, to request that he would amuse himself in some other way, or, that, at all events, if he drew likenesses, he would not put mottoes to them. The next day the prisoner's room was full of pictures and of mottoes. Monsieur de Beaufort, in common with many other prisoners, was bent upon doing things which were prohibited; and the only resource which the governor had was, one day when the duke was playing at tennis, to efface all these drawings, consisting chiefly of profiles. M. de Beaufort did not venture to draw the cardinal's fat face.

The duke thanked Monsieur de Chavigny for having, as he said, cleaned his drawing paper for him; he then divided the walls of his room into compartments, and dedicated each of these compartments to some incident in Mazarin's life. In one was depicted the "Illustrious Coxcumb" receiving a shower of blows from Cardinal Bentivoglio, whose servant he had been; another the "Illustrious Mazarin," acting the part of Ignatius Loyola in a tragedy of that name; a third, the "Illustrious Mazarin" stealing the portfolio of prime minister from Monsieur de Chavigny, who had expected to have it; a fourth, the "Illustrious Coxcumb Mazarin" refusing to give Laporte, the young king's valet, clean sheets; and saying that it was quite enough for the king of France to have sheets every three months.

The governor, of course, thought proper to threaten his prisoner that if he did not give up drawing such pictures, he should be obliged to deprive him of all means of amusing himself in that manner. To this Monsieur de Beaufort replied, that since every opportunity of distinguishing himself in arms was taken from him, he wished to make himself celebrated in the fine arts; since he could not be a Bayard, he would become a Raphael, or a Michael Angelo. Nevertheless one day when Monsieur de Beaufort was walking in the

meadow, his fire was put out; his coal taken away, and all means of drawing completely destroyed.

The poor duke swore, fell into a rage, yelled, and declared that they wished to starve him to death, as they had starved the Maréchal Ornano, and the Grand Prior of Vendôme; but he refused to promise that he would not make any more drawings, and remained without any fire in the room all the winter.

His next act was to purchase a dog from one of his keepers. With this animal, which he called Pistache, he was often shut up for hours alone, superintending, as every one supposed, its education. At last, when Pistache was sufficiently well trained, Monsieur de Beaufort invited the governors and officers of Vincennes to attend a representation which he was going to have in his apartment.

The party assembled; the room was lighted with wax-lights, and the prisoner, with a bit of plaster he had taken out of the wall of his room, had traced a long white line, representing a cord, on the floor. Pistache on a signal from his master, placed himself on this line, raised himself on his hind paws, and holding in his front paws a wand with which clothes used to be beaten, he began to dance upon the line with as many contortions as a rope-dancer. Having been several times up and down it, he gave the wand back to his master, and began, without hesitation, to perform the same revolutions over again.

The intelligent creature was received with loud applause.

The first part of the entertainment being concluded, Pistache was desired to say what o'clock it was; he was shown Monsieur de Chavigny's watch; it was then half-past six. The dog raised and dropped his paw six times; the seventh he let it remain upraised. Nothing could be better done; a sun-dial could not have shown the hour with greater precision.

Then the question was put to him who was the best jailer in all the prisons of France?

The dog performed three evolutions round the circle, and laid himself, with the deepest respect, at the feet of Monsieur de Chavigny, who at first seemed inclined to like the joke, and laughed loud; but a frown soon succeeded, and he bit his lips with vexation.

Then the duke put to Pistache this difficult question: who was the greatest thief in the world?

Pistache went again the round of the circle, but stopped at no one; and, at last, went to the door, and began to scratch and bark.

"See, gentlemen," said M. de Beaufort, "this wonderful animal, not finding here what I asked for, seeks it out of doors; you shall, however, have his answer. Pistache, my friend, come here. Is not the greatest thief in the world, Monsieur (the king's secretary) La Camus, who came to Paris with twenty francs in his pocket, and who now possesses six millions?"

The dog shook his head.

"Then is it not," resumed the duke, "the Superintendent Emery, who gave his son, when he was married, three hundred thousand francs and a house, compared to which the Tuileries are a heap of ruins and the Louvre a paltry building?"

The dog again shook his head, as if to say "no."

"Then," said the prisoner, "let's think who it can be. Can it be, can it possibly be, the illustrious coxcomb, Mazarin de Piscina, hey?"

Pistache made violent signs that it was, by raising and lowering his head eight or ten times successively.

"Gentlemen, you see," said the duke to those present, who dared not even smile, "that it is the 'illustrious coxcomb' who is the greatest thief in the world; at least, according to Pistache."

"Let us go on to another of his exercises.

"Gentlemen!"—there was a profound silence in the room when the duke again addressed them—"do you not remember that the Duc de Guise taught all the dogs in Paris to jump for Mademoiselle de Pons, whom he styled, 'the fairest of the fair.' Pistache is going to show you how superior he is to all other dogs. Monsieur de Chavigny, be so good as to lend me your cane. Now, Pistache, my dear, jump the height of this cane for Madame Montbazou."

The dog found no difficulty in it, and jumped joyfully for Madame de Montbazou.

"But," interposed M. de Chavigny, "it seems to me that Pistache is only doing what other dogs have done when they jumped for Mademoiselle de Pons."

"Stop," said the duke; "Pistache, jump for the queen." And he raised his cane six inches higher.

The dog sprang, and in spite of the height, jumped lightly over it.

"And now," said the duke, raising it still six inches higher, "jump for the king."

The dog obeyed, and jumped quickly over the cane.

"Now, then," said the duke, and as he spoke, lowered the

cane almost level with the ground; "Pistache, my friend, jump for the illustrious coxcomb, Mazarin de Piscina."

The dog turned his back to the cane.

"What," asked the duke, "what do you mean?" and he gave him the cane again, first making a semicircle from the head to the tail of Pistache. "Jump, then, Monsieur Pistache."

But Pistache, as at first, turned round on his legs, and stood with his back to the cane.

Monsieur de Beaufort made the experiment a third time: but this time Pistache rushed furiously on the cane and broke it with his teeth.

Monsieur de Beaufort took the pieces out of his mouth, and presented them with great formality to Monsieur de Chavigny, saying that for that evening the entertainment was ended, but in three months it should be repeated, when Pistache would have learned some new tricks.

Three days afterward Pistache was poisoned.

Then the duke said openly that his dog had been killed by a drug with which they meant to poison him; and one day after dinner, he went to bed, calling out that he had pains in the stomach, and that Mazarin had poisoned him.

This fresh impertinence reached the ears of the cardinal, and alarmed him much. The donjon of Vincennes was considered very unhealthy, and Madame de Rambouillet had said that the room in which the Maréchal Ornano and the Grand Prior de Vendôme had died was worth its weight in arsenic—a bon-mot which had great success. So the prisoner was henceforth to eat nothing that was not previously tasted, and La Ramée was, in consequence, placed near him as taster.

Every kind of revenge was practiced upon the duke by the governor, in return for the insults of the innocent Pistache. De Chavigny, who, according to report, was a son of Richelieu's, and had been a creature of the late cardinal's, understood tyranny. He took from the duke all the steel knives and silver forks, and replaced them with silver knives and wooden forks, pretending that, as he had been informed that the duke was to pass all his life at Vincennes, he was afraid of the prisoner's attempting suicide. A fortnight afterward the duke, going to the tennis court, found two rows of trees about the size of his little finger planted by the roadside; he asked what they were for, and was told that they were to shade him from the sun on some future day. One morning the gardener went to him and told him, as if to please him, that

he was going to plant a bed of asparagus for his use. Now, as every one knows, asparagus takes four years in coming to perfection, this civility infuriated Monsieur de Beaufort.

At last his patience was exhausted. He assembled his keepers, and, notwithstanding his well-known difficulty of utterance, addressed them as follows:

"Gentlemen! will you permit a grandson of Henry IV. to be overwhelmed with insults and ignominy? Odds fish! as my grandfather used to say—I once reigned in Paris; do you know that? I had the king and monsieur the whole of one day in my care. The queen at that time liked me, and called me the most honest man in the kingdom. Gentlemen and citizens, set me free; I shall go to the Louvre, and strangle Mazarin. You shall be my body guard. I will make you all captains, with good pensions! Odds fish!—on—march forward!"

But, eloquent as he might be, the eloquence of the grandson of Henry IV. did not touch those hearts of stone; not one man stirred, so Monsieur de Beaufort was obliged to be satisfied with calling them rascals, and cruel foes.

Sometimes, when Monsieur de Chavigny paid him a visit, the duke used to ask him what he should think if he saw an army of Parisians, all fully armed, appear at Vincennes to deliver him from prison.

"My lord," answered De Chavigny, with a low bow, "I have on the ramparts twenty pieces of artillery, and in my casemates thirty thousand guns. I should cannonade the troops as well as I could."

"Yes—but after you had fired off your thirty thousand guns, they would take the donjon; the donjon being taken, I should be obliged to let them hang you—for which I should be very unhappy, certainly."

And, in his turn, the duke bowed low to Monsieur de Chavigny.

"For myself, on the other hand, my lord," returned the governor, "the first rebel that should pass the threshold of my postern doors, I should be obliged to kill you with my own hand, since you were confided peculiarly to my care, and as I am obliged to give you up—dead or alive."

And he bowed low again to his highness.

These bitter and sweet pleasantries lasted ten minutes, or sometimes longer; but always finished thus:

Monsieur de Chavigny, turning toward the door, used to call out:

"Halloo! La Ramée!"

La Ramée came into the room.

"La Ramée, I recommend Monsieur le Duc to you, particularly; treat him as a man of his rank and family ought to be treated; therefore never leave him alone an instant."

La Ramée became therefore the duke's dinner guest, by compulsion—his eternal keeper—the shadow of his person; but La Ramée—gay, frank, convivial, fond of play, a great hand at tennis—had one defect in the duke's eyes—he was incorruptible.

One may be a jailer or a keeper, and at the same time a good father and husband. La Ramée adored his wife and children, whom now he could only catch a glimpse of from the top of the wall, when, in order to please him, they used to walk on the opposite side of the moat. 'Twas too brief an enjoyment, and La Ramée felt that the gayety of heart which he had regarded as the cause of that health (of which it was, perhaps, rather the result) would not long survive such a mode of life.

He accepted, therefore, with delight, an offer made to him by his friend the steward of the Duc de Grammont, to give him a substitute; he also spoke of it to Monsieur de Chavigny, who promised that he would not oppose it in any way—that is, if he approved of the person proposed.

We consider it as useless to draw a physical or moral portrait of Grimaud: if—as we hope—our readers have not wholly forgotten the first part of this work, they must have preserved a clear idea of that estimable individual—who is wholly unchanged—except that he is twenty years older, an advance in life that has made him only more silent; although, since the alteration that had been working in himself, Athos had given Grimaud permission to speak.

But Grimaud had for twelve or fifteen years preserved an habitual silence, and a habit of fifteen or twenty years' duration becomes a second nature.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GRIMAUD BEGINS HIS FUNCTIONS.

GRIMAUD thereupon presented himself with his smooth exterior at the donjon of Vincennes. Now Monsieur de Chavigny prided himself on his infallible penetration; for that which almost proved that he was the son of Richelieu

was his everlasting pretension; he examined attentively the countenance of the applicant for place, and fancied that the contracted eyebrows, thin lips, hooked nose, and prominent cheek-bones of Grimaud, were favorable signs. He addressed about twelve words to him; Grimaud answered in four.

"There's a promising fellow, and I have found out his merits," said Monsieur de Chavigny. "Go," he added, "and make yourself agreeable to Monsieur la Ramée, and tell him that you suit me in all respects."

Grimaud had every quality which could attract a man on duty who wishes to have a deputy. So, after a thousand questions which met with only a word in reply, La Ramée, fascinated by this sobriety in speech, rubbed his hands, and engaged Grimaud.

"My orders?" asked Grimaud.

"They are these: never to leave the prisoner alone; to keep away from him every sharp or piercing instrument—and to prevent his conversing any length of time with the keepers."

"Those are all?" asked Grimaud.

"All, now," replied La Ramée.

"Good," answered Grimaud; and he went right to the prisoner.

The duke was in the act of combing his beard, which he had allowed to grow as well as his hair, in order to reproach Mazarin with his wretched appearance and condition. But having, some days previously seen, from the top of the donjon, Madame de Montbazou pass in her carriage, and still cherishing an affection for that beautiful woman, he did not wish to be to her what he wished to be to Mazarin; and, in the hope of seeing her again, had asked for a leaden comb, which was allowed him. The comb was to be a leaden one, because his beard, like that of most fair people, was rather red; he therefore dyed it when he combed it out.

As Grimaud entered he saw this comb on the tea-table; he took it up, and, as he took it, he made a low bow.

The duke looked at this strange figure with surprise. The figure put the comb in its pocket.

"Ho!—hey! what's that?" cried the duke, "and who is this creature?"

Grimaud did not answer, but bowed a second time.

"Art thou dumb?" cried the duke.

Grimaud made a sign that he was not.

"What art thou, then? Answer! I command thee!" said the duke.

"A keeper," replied Grimaud.

"A keeper!" reiterated the duke; "there was nothing wanting in my collection except this gallows-bird. Halloo! La Ramée—some one!"

La Ramée ran in haste to obey the call.

"Who is this wretch who takes my comb and puts it in his pocket?" asked the duke.

"One of your guards, my prince—a man full of talent and merit—whom you will like, as I and Monsieur de Chavigny do, I am sure."

"Why does he take my comb?"

"Why do you take my lord's comb?" asked Ramée.

Grimaud drew the comb from his pocket, and passing his fingers over the largest teeth, pronounced this one word—"Piercing."

"True," said La Ramée.

"What does the animal say?" asked the duke.

"That the king has forbidden your lordship to have any piercing instrument."

"Are you mad, La Ramée?—you yourself gave me this comb."

"I was very wrong, my lord; for in giving it to you I acted in opposition to my orders." The duke looked furiously at Grimaud.

"I perceive that that creature will become odious to me," he muttered.

Grimaud, nevertheless, was resolved, for certain reasons, not at once to come to a full rupture with the prisoner; he wanted to inspire, not a sudden repugnance, but a good, and sound, and steady hatred; he retired, therefore, and gave place to four guards who, having breakfasted, could attend on the prisoner.

A fresh practical joke had now occurred to the duke. He had asked for crawfish for his breakfast on the following morning: he intended to pass the day in making a small gallows, and hang one of the finest of these fish in the middle of his room—the red colors evidently conveying an allusion to the cardinal—so that he might have the pleasure of hanging Mazarin in effigy, without being accused of having hung anything except a crawfish.

The day was employed in preparations for the execution. Every one grows childish in prison; but the character of Monsieur de Beaufort was particularly disposed to become so. In the course of his morning's walk he collected two or three small branches from a tree, and found a small piece of broken

glass, a discovery which delighted him. When he came home he formed his handkerchief into a loop.

Nothing of all this escaped Grimaud, but La Ramée looked on with the curiosity of a father who thinks that he may perhaps get an idea of a new toy for his children; the guards regarded it all with indifference. When everything was ready—the gallows hung in the middle of the room—the loop made—and when the duke had cast a glance upon the plate of crawfish, in order to select the finest specimen among them, he looked round for his piece of glass—it had disappeared.

“Who has taken my piece of glass?” asked the duke, frowning.

Grimaud made a sign to denote that he had done so.

“How! thou, again! Why didst thou take it?”

“Yes—why?” asked La Ramée.

Grimaud, who held the piece of glass in his hand, said:

“Sharp.”

“True, my lord!” exclaimed La Ramée. “Ah, deuce take it! we have got a precious lad.”

“Monsieur Grimaud!” said the duke, “for your sake, I beg of you, never come within the reach of my fist!”

“Hush! hush!” cried La Ramée, “give me your gibbet, my lord, I will shape it out for you with my knife.”

And he took the gibbet and shaped it out as neatly as possible.

“That’s it,” said the duke; “now make me a little hole in the floor while I go and fetch the culprit.”

La Ramée knelt down and made a hole in the floor; meanwhile the duke hung the crawfish up by a thread. Then he placed the gibbet in the middle of the room, bursting with laughter.

La Ramée laughed also, and the guards laughed in chorus; Grimaud, however, did not even smile. He approached La Ramée, and showing him the crawfish, hung up by the thread:

“Cardinal!” he said.

“Hung by his highness the Duc de Beaufort!” cried the prisoner, laughing violently, “and by Master Jacques Chrysostom La Ramée, the king’s commissioner.”

La Ramée uttered a cry of horror, and rushed toward the gibbet, which he broke at once, and threw the pieces out of the window. He was going to throw the crawfish out also, when Grimaud snatched it from his hands.

“Good to eat!” he said; and he put it into his pocket.

This scene so enchanted the duke that, at the moment, he forgave Grimaud for his part in it; but on reflection, he hated him more and more, being convinced that he had some bad motive for his conduct.

The prisoner happened to remark among the guards one man, with a very good countenance; and he favored this man the more as Grimaud became the more and more odious to him. One morning he took this man on one side and had succeeded in speaking to him, when Grimaud entered, saw what was going on, approached the duke respectfully, but took the guard by the arm.

"Go away," he said.

The guard obeyed.

"You are insupportable," cried the duke: "I shall beat you."

Grimaud bowed.

"I shall break every bone in your body," cried the duke.

Grimaud bowed, and stepped back.

"Mr. Spy," cried the duke, more and more enraged, "I shall strangle you with my own hands."

And he extended his hands toward Grimaud, who merely thrust the guard out, and shut the door behind him. At the same time he felt the duke's arms on his shoulders, like two iron claws; but instead either of calling out or defending himself, he placed his forefinger on his lips, and said, in a low tone:

"Hush!"—smiling as he uttered the word.

A gesture, a smile, and a word from Grimaud, all at once, were so unusual, that his highness stopped short, astounded.

Grimaud took advantage of that instant to draw from his vest a charming little note, with an aristocratic seal, and presented it to the duke without a word.

The duke, more and more bewildered, let Grimaud loose, and took the note.

"From Madame de Montbazon!" he cried.

Grimaud nodded assent.

The duke tore open the note, passed his hands over his eyes, for he was dazzled and confused, and read:

"MY DEAR DUKE: You may entirely confide on the brave lad who will give you this note; he has consented to enter into the service of your keeper, and to shut himself up at Vincennes with you, in order to prepare and assist your escape, which we are contriving. The moment of your deliverance is at hand; have patience and courage, and

remember that, in spite of time and absence, all your friends continue to cherish for you the sentiments that they have professed. Yours wholly, and most affectionately,

“MARIE DE MONTBAZON.”

“P.S. I sign my full name, for I should be vain if I could suppose that after five years of absence you would remember my initials.”

The poor duke became perfectly giddy. What for five years he had been wanting—a faithful servant—a friend—a helping hand—seemed to have fallen from heaven just when he expected it the least.

“Oh, dearest Marie! she thinks of me, then, after five years of separation! Heavens! there is constancy!” Then turning to Grimaud he said:

“And thou, my brave fellow, thou consentest then to aid me?”

Grimaud signified his assent.

“What then shall we do? how proceed?”

“It is now eleven,” answered Grimaud. “Let my lord at two o’clock ask leave to make up a game at tennis, with La Ramée, and let him send two or three balls over the ramparts.”

“And then?”

“Your highness will approach the walls and call out to a man who works in the moat to send them back again.”

“I understand,” said the duke.

Grimaud made a sign that he was going away.

“Ah!” cried the duke, “will you not accept any money from me?”

“I wish my lord would make me one promise.”

“What? speak!”

“’Tis this—when we escape together, that I shall go everywhere, and be always first; for if my lord should be overtaken and caught, there’s every chance of his being brought back to prison, whereas, if I’m caught, the least that can befall me—is to be hung.”

“True; on my honor as a gentleman, it shall be as thou dost suggest.”

“Now,” resumed Grimaud, “I’ve only one thing more to ask, that your highness will continue to detest me.”

“I shall try,” said the duke.

At this moment La Ramée, after the interview which we have described with the cardinal, entered the room. The duke had thrown himself—as he was wont to do in moments

of dullness and vexation—on his bed. La Ramée cast an inquiring look around him.

"Well, my lord," said La Ramée, with his rude laugh; "you still set yourself against this poor fellow?"

"So 'tis you, La Ramée; in faith 'tis time you came back again. I threw myself on the bed, and turned my nose to the wall that I mightn't break my promise and strangle Grimaud. I feel stupid beyond everything to-day."

"Then let us have a match in the tennis-court," exclaimed La Ramée.

"If you wish it."

"I am at your service, my lord."

"I protest, my dear La Ramée," said the duke, "that you are a charming person, and that I would stay forever at Vincennes, to have the pleasure of your society."

"My lord," replied La Ramée, "I think if it depended on the cardinal, your wishes would be fulfilled."

"How?"

"He sent for me to-day; in short, my lord, you are his nightmare."

The duke smiled with bitterness.

"Ah, La Ramée! if you would but accept my offers, I would make your fortune."

"How? you would no sooner have left prison than your goods would be confiscated."

"I shall no sooner be out of prison than I shall be master of Paris."

"Pshaw! pshaw! I cannot hear such things said as that; I see, my lord, I shall be obliged to fetch Grimaud."

"Well, then, let us go and have a game at tennis, La Ramée."

"My lord—I beg your highness' pardon—but I must beg for half an hour's leave of absence."

"Why?"

"Because Monseigneur Mazarin is a prouder man than your highness, though not of such high birth; he forgot to ask me to breakfast."

"Well, shall I send for some breakfast here?"

"No, my lord; I must tell you that the confectioner who lived opposite the castle—Father Marteau, as they called him——"

"Well?"

"Well, he sold his business a week ago to a confectioner from Paris—an invalid, ordered country air for his health."

"Well, what have I to do with that?"

"Why, good lord! this man, your highness, when he saw me stop before his shop, where he has a display of things which would make your mouth water, my lord, asked me to get him the custom of the prisoners in the donjon. 'I bought,' says he, 'the business of my predecessor, on the strength of his assurance that he supplied the castle; whereas, on my honor, Monsieur de Chavigny, though I've been here a week, has not ordered so much as a tartlet.' So, my lord, I am going to try his patés; and, as I am fasting, you understand, I would, with your highness' leave——" And La Ramée bent low.

"Go, then, animal," said the duke; "but remember, I only allow you half an hour."

"May I promise your custom to the successor of Father Marteau, my lord?"

"Yes—if he does not put mushrooms in his pies—thou knowest that mushrooms from the wood of Vincennes are fatal to my family."

La Ramée went out, but in five minutes one of the officers of the guard entered, in compliance with the strict orders of the cardinal, that the prisoner should never be left one moment.

But, during these five minutes, the duke had had time to read over again the note from Madame de Montbazan, which proved to the prisoner that his friends were concerting plans for his deliverance; but in what way he knew not.

But his confidence in Grimaud, whose petty persecutions he now perceived were only a blind, increased, and he conceived the highest opinion of his intellect, and resolved to trust entirely to his guidance.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH THE CONTENTS OF THE PATES MADE BY THE SUCCESSOR OF FATHER MARTEAU ARE DESCRIBED.

IN HALF an hour La Ramée returned full of glee, like most men who have eaten, and more especially drunk, to their heart's content. The patés were excellent and the wine delicious.

The weather was fine, and the game of tennis took place in the open air.

At two o'clock the tennis balls began, according to Grimaud's directions, to take the direction of the moat, much to

the joy of La Ramée, who marked fifteen whenever the duke sent a ball into the moat; and very soon balls were wanting, so many had gone over. La Ramée then proposed to send some one to pick them up. But the duke remarked that it would be losing time; and going near the rampart himself, and looking over, he saw a man working in one of the numerous little gardens cleared out by peasants on the opposite side of the moat.

"Hey, friend!" cried the duke.

The man raised his head, and the duke was about to utter a cry of surprise. The peasant, the gardener, was Rochefort, whom he believed to be in the Bastille.

"Well! who's up there?" said the man.

"Be so good as to send us back our balls," said the duke.

The gardener nodded, and began to throw up the balls, which were picked up by La Ramée and the guard. One however, fell at the duke's feet; and seeing that it was intended for him, he put it into his pocket.

La Ramée was in ecstasies at having beaten a prince of the blood.

The duke went indoors, and retired to bed, where he spent, indeed, the greater part of every day, as they had taken his books away. La Ramée carried off all his clothes, in order to be certain that the duke would not stir. However, the duke contrived to hide the ball under his bolster, and as soon as the door was closed he tore off the cover of the ball with his teeth, and found underneath it the following letter:

"MY LORD: Your friends watch over you, and the hour of your deliverance draws near. Ask to-morrow to have a pie made by the new confectioner opposite the castle, and who is no other than Noirmont, your former 'maître d'hôtel.' Do not open the pie till you are alone. I hope you will be satisfied with its contents.

"Your highness' most devoted servant,

"In the Bastille, as elsewhere,

"COMTE DE ROCHEFORT."

The duke, who had latterly been allowed a fire, burned the letter, but kept the ball, and went to bed, hiding the ball under his bolster. La Ramée entered: he smiled kindly on the prisoner; for he was an excellent man who had taken a great liking for the captive prince. He endeavored to cheer him up in his solitude.

"Ah, my friend!" cried the duke, "you are so good; if I could but go, as you do, and eat patés and drink Burgundy at the house of Father Marteau's successor!"

"'Tis true, my lord," answered La Ramée, "that his patés are famous, and his wine magnificent."

"Good," said the duke to himself; "it seems that one of Master La Ramée's seven deadly sins is gluttony."

Then aloud:

"Well, my dear La Ramée! the day after to-morrow is a holiday."

"Yes, my lord, Pentecost."

"Will you give me a lesson the day after to-morrow?"

"In what?"

"In gastronomy."

"Willingly, my lord."

"But *tete-à-tete*. The guards shall go to sup in the canteen of Monsieur de Chavigny—we'll have a supper here, under your direction."

"Hum!" said La Ramée.

The duke watched the countenance of La Ramée with an anxious glance.

"Well," he asked, "that will do? Will it not?"

"Yes, my lord, on one condition."

"What?"

"That Grimaud should wait on us at table."

Nothing could be more agreeable to the duke; however, he had presence of mind enough to exclaim:

"Send your Grimaud to the devil! he'll spoil my feast. I see you distrust me."

"My lord, the day after to-morrow is Pentecost."

"Well! what of that?"

"I have already told you what that magician had predicted."

"And what was it?"

"That the day of Pentecost would not pass without your highness being out of Vincennes."

"You believe in sorcerers, then, you fool!"

"I—I care for them, that—" and he snapped his fingers; "but it is my Lord Giulio who cares for them—as an Italian, he is superstitious."

The duke shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, then," with a well-acted good humor, "I allow of Grimaud, but no one else—you must manage it all. Order whatever you like for supper—the only thing I specify is one of those pies; and tell the confectioner that I will promise him my custom if he excels this time in his pies—not only now, but when I leave my prison."

"Then you think you shall leave it?" said La Ramée.

"The devil!" replied the prince; "surely at the death of Mazarin. I am fifteen years younger than he is. At Vincennes, 'tis true, one lives faster——"

"My lord," replied La Ramée, "my lord——"

"Or one dies sooner, so it comes to the same thing."

La Ramée was going out. He stopped, however, at the door for an instant.

"Whom does your highness wish me to send to you?"

"Any one, except Grimaud."

"The officer of the guard, then? with his chessboard?"

"Yes."

Five minutes afterward the officer entered, and the duke seemed to be immersed in the sublime combinations of chess.

It was midnight before he went to sleep that evening, and he awoke at daybreak. Wild dreams had disturbed his repose. He dreamed that he had been gifted with wings—he wished to fly away. For a time these wings had supported him; but, when he had reached a certain height, this new aid had failed him. His wings were broken, and he seemed to sink into a bottomless abyss, whence he awoke, bathed in perspiration, and as much overcome as if he had really fallen. He fell asleep again, and another vision appeared. He was in a subterranean passage, by which he was to leave Vincennes. Grimaud was walking before him with a lantern. By degrees the passage narrowed, yet the duke continued his course. At last it became so narrow that the fugitive tried in vain to proceed. The sides of the walls seemed to close in, and to press against him. He made fruitless efforts to go on; it was impossible. Nevertheless, he still saw Grimaud, with his lantern in front, advancing. He wished to call out to him, but could not utter a word. Then, at the other extremity, he heard the footsteps of those who were pursuing him. These steps came on—they came fast. He was discovered—all hopes of flight were gone. Still the walls seemed to be closing on him; they appeared to be in concert with his enemies. At last he heard the voice of La Ramée. La Ramée took his hand, and laughed loud. He was captured again, and conducted to the low and vaulted chamber, in which Ornano, Puylaurens, and his uncle had died. Their three graves were there, rising above the ground, and a third was also there—yawning to receive a corpse.

The duke was obliged to make as many efforts to awaken as he had done to go to sleep; and La Ramée found him so pale and fatigued that he inquired whether he was ill.

"What is the matter with your highness?" he asked.

"'Tis thy fault, thou simpleton," answered the duke.

"With your idle nonsense yesterday, about escaping, you worried me so, that I dreamed that I was trying to escape, and broke my neck in doing so."

La Ramée laughed.

"Come," he said, "'tis a warning from heaven. Never commit such an imprudence as to try to escape, except in your dreams. Listen! your supper is ordered."

"Ah! and what is it to be? Monsieur, my major-domo, will there be a pie?"

"I think so indeed; as high as a tower."

"You told him it was for me?"

"Yes; and he said he would do his best to please your highness."

"Good!" exclaimed the duke, rubbing his hands.

"Devil take it, my lord! what a gourmand you are becoming. I haven't seen you with so cheerful a face these five years."

At this moment Grimaud entered, and signified to La Ramée that he had something to say to him.

The duke instantly recovered his composure.

"I forbade that man to come here," he said.

"'Tis my fault," replied La Ramée; "but he must stay here while I go to see Monsieur de Chavigny, who has some orders to give me."

And La Ramée went out. Grimaud looked after him, and when the door was closed, he drew out of his pocket a pencil and a sheet of paper.

"Write, my lord," he said.

"And what?"

Grimaud dictated.

"All is ready for to-morrow evening. Keep watch from seven till nine o'clock. Have two riding-horses quite ready. We shall descend by the first window in the gallery."

"What next?"

"Sign your name, my lord."

The duke signed.

"Now, my lord, give me, if you have not lost it, the ball—that which contained the letter."

The duke took it from under his pillow, and gave it to Grimaud. Grimaud gave a grim smile.

"Now," said the duke, "tell me what this famous raised pie is to contain."

"Two poniards, a knotted rope, and a poire d'angoisse."*

"Yes, I understand—we shall take to ourselves the poniards and the rope," replied the duke.

"And make La Ramée eat the pear," answered Grimaud.

"My dear Grimaud, thou speakest seldom, but when thou dost speak, one must do thee justice—thy words are of gold."

CHAPTER XX.

ONE OF MARIE MICHON'S ADVENTURES.

WHILE these projects were being formed by the Duc de Beaufort and Grimaud, the Comte de la Fère and the Vicomte de Bragelonne were entering Paris by the Rue du Faubourg Saint Marcel.

They stopped at the sign of the Fox, in the Rue du Vieux Colombier, a tavern known for many years by Athos, and asked for two bedrooms.

"You must dress yourself, Raoul," said Athos. "I am going to present you to some one. I wish you to look well, so arrange your dress with care."

"I hope, sir," replied the youth, smiling, "that there's no idea of a marriage for me; you know my engagement to Louise?"

Athos, in his turn, smiled also.

"No, don't be alarmed—although it is to a lady that I am going to present you—and I am anxious that you should love her——"

"What age is she?" inquired the Vicomte de Bragelonne.

"My dear Raoul, learn once for all, that that is a question which is never asked. When you can find out a woman's age by her face it is useless to ask it; when you cannot do so it is indiscreet."

"Is she beautiful?"

"During sixteen years she was deemed not only the prettiest but the most graceful woman in France."

This reply reassured the vicomte. A woman who had been a reigning beauty for sixteen years could not be the subject of any scheme for him. He retired to his toilet. When he reappeared, Athos received him with the same paternal smile

* This poire d'angoisse was a famous gag, in the form of a pear, which, being thrust into the mouth, by the aid of a spring dilated so as to distend the jaws to their greatest width.

as that which he had often bestowed on D'Artagnan—but a more profound tenderness for Raoul was now visibly impressed upon his face.

Athos cast a glance at his feet, hands, and hair—those three marks of race. The youth's dark hair was neatly parted, and hung in curls, forming a sort of dark frame round his face—such was the fashion of the day. Gloves of gray kid, matching the hat, displayed the form of a slender and elegant hand; while his boots, similar in color to the hat and gloves, confined the feet, small as those of a child of ten years old.

"Come," murmured Athos, "if she is not proud of him, she will be hard to please."

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. The two travelers proceeded to the Rue St. Dominique, and stopped at the door of a magnificent hotel, surmounted with the arms of De Luynes.

"'Tis here," said Athos.

He entered the hotel, and ascended the front steps, and addressing a footman who waited there in a grand livery, asked if the Duchesse de Chevreuse was visible, and if she could receive the Comte de la Fère?

The servant returned with a message to say that though the duchess had not the honor of knowing Monsieur de la Fère, she would receive him. He was accordingly announced.

Madame de Chevreuse, whose name appears so often in our story—"The Three Guardsmen"—without her actually having appeared in any scene, was still a most beautiful woman. Although about forty-four or forty-five years old, she scarcely seemed thirty-eight. She still had her rich fair hair; her large, animated, intelligent eyes, so often opened by intrigue, so often closed by the blindness of love. She had still her nymph-like form, so that when her back was turned, she seemed to be still the girl who had jumped with Anne of Austria over the moat of the Tuileries in 1563. In all other respects she was the same mad creature who threw over her amours such an air of originality as to make them almost a proverb in her family.

She was in a little boudoir looking upon a garden, and hung with blue damask, adorned by red flowers, with a foliage of gold; and reclined upon a sofa, her head supported on the rich tapestry which covered it. She held a book in her hand, and her arm was supported by a cushion.

As the footman announced two strangers, she raised herself a little and peeped out, with some curiosity.

Athos appeared.

He was dressed in violet-colored velvet, trimmed with the same color. His shoulder-knots were of burnished silver; his mantle had no gold nor embroidery on it, and a simple plume of violet feathers adorned his hat; his boots were of black leather; and at his girdle hung that sword with a magnificent hilt that Porthos had so often admired in the Rue Feronnière. Splendid lace formed the falling collar of his shirt, and lace fell also over the tops of his boots.

In his whole person he bore such an impress of high condition, that Madame de Chevreuse half rose from her seat when she saw him, and made him a sign to sit down near her. He obeyed, the servant disappeared, and the door was closed.

There was a momentary silence, during which these two persons looked at each other attentively.

The duchess was the first to speak.

"Well, sir! I am waiting to hear what you wish to say to me—with impatience."

"And I, madame," replied Athos, "am looking with admiration."

"Sir," said Madame de Chevreuse, "you must excuse me, but I long to know to whom I am talking. You belong to the court, doubtless, yet I have never seen you at court. Have you been in the Bastille by any mischance?"

"No, madame, I have not; but perhaps I am on the road to it."

"Ah! then tell me who you are, and get along with you," replied the duchess, with the gayety which made her so charming, "for I am sufficiently in bad odor there already, without compromising myself still more."

"Who I am, madame? My name has been mentioned to you—the Comte de la Fère—you do not know that name. I once bore another, which you knew; but you have certainly forgotten it."

"Tell it me, sir."

"Formerly," said the count, "I was Athos."

Madame de Chevreuse looked astonished. The name was not wholly forgotten, but mixed up and confused with some old recollections.

"Stop," she said.

And she placed her hands on her brow, as if to force the fugitive ideas it contained to be concentrated for a moment.

"Shall I help you, madame?" asked Athos.

"Yes, do," said the duchess.

"This Athos was connected with three young musketeers, named Porthos, D'Artagnan, and——"

He stopped short.

"And Aramis," said the duchess, quickly.

"And Aramis: you have not forgotten that name."

"No," she said; "poor Aramis; a charming man, elegant, discreet, and a writer of poetry verses. I am afraid he has turned out ill," she added.

"He has; he is an abbé."

"Ah, what a misfortune!" exclaimed the duchess, playing carelessly with her fan. "Indeed, sir, I thank you; you have recalled one of the most agreeable recollections of my youth."

"Will you permit me, then, to recall another to you?"

"Anything relating to him?"

"Yes and no. Aramis was intimate with a young needlewoman from Tours, a cousin of his, named Marie Michon."

"Ah, I knew her!" cried the duchess. "It was to her he wrote from the siege of Rochelle, to warn her of a plot against the Duke of Buckingham."

"Exactly so; will you allow me to speak to you of her?"

"If," replied the duchess, with a meaning look, "you do not say too much against her."

"You encourage me, madame. I shall continue," said Athos; and he began his narrative.

He alluded to events long gone by; to the journey in disguise of Marie Michon, the supposed needlewoman of Tours, but, in fact, the beautiful, intriguing, and at one time, all powerful Duchesse de Chevreuse, into Spain: he spoke of her rencounters and adventures; and he told her anecdotes of her life which seemed to her mind to be the revelations of a sorcerer rather than the disclosures of a mere man. . . . These disclosures remain in mystery; they were succeeded by an exclamation of joy from Madame de Chevreuse.

"He is there! my son! the son of Marie Michon! But I must see him instantly."

"Take care, madame," said Athos, "for he knows neither his father nor his mother."

"You have kept the secret! you have brought him to see me, thinking to make me happy. Oh, thanks! thanks! sir," cried Madame de Chevreuse, seizing his hand, and trying to put it to her lips; "you have a noble heart."

"I bring him to you, madame," said Athos, withdrawing his hand, "hoping that, in your turn, you will do something for him; till now I have watched over his education, and I have made him, I hope, an accomplished gentleman; but I am now obliged to return to the dangerous and wandering life of

party faction. To-morrow I plunge into an adventurous affair in which I may be killed. Then it will devolve on you to push him on in that world where he is called on to occupy a place."

"Be assured," cried the duchess, "I shall do what I can. I have but little influence now, but all that I have shall be his. As to his title and fortune——"

"As to that, madame, I have made over to him the estate of Bragelonne, my inheritance, which will give him ten thousand francs a year, and the title of vicomte—and now I will call him."

Athos moved toward the door; the duchess held him back.

"Is he handsome?" she asked.

Athos smiled.

"He resembles his mother."

And he opened the door, and desired the young man to come in.

The duchess could not forbear uttering a cry of joy on seeing so handsome a young cavalier, who surpassed all that her pride had been able to conceive.

"Vicomte, come here," said Athos; "the duchess permits you to kiss her hand."

The youth approached with his charming smile, and his head bare, and, kneeling down, kissed the hand of the Duchesse de Chevreuse.

"Sir," he said, turning to Athos, "was it not in compassion to my timidity that you told me that this lady was the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and is she not the queen?"

"No," said the duchess, extending her hand to him; "no; unhappily I am not the queen, for, if I were, I should do for you at once all that you deserve: but let us see; whatever I may be," she added, her eyes glistening with delight, "let us see what profession you wish to follow?"

Athos, standing, looked at them both with indescribable pleasure.

"Madame," answered the youth in his sweet voice, "it seems to me that there is only one career for a gentleman—that of the army. I have been brought up by Monsieur le Comte with the intention, I believe, of making me a soldier; and he gave me reason to hope that, at Paris, he would present me to some one who would recommend me to the favor of the prince."

"Yes, I understand it well. Personally I am on bad terms with him, on account of the quarrels between Madame de Montbazon, my mother-in-law, and Madame de Longueville.

But the Prince de Marsillac! yes, indeed, that's the right thing. The Prince de Marsillac, my old friend—he will recommend our young friend to Madame de Longueville, who will give him a letter to her brother, the prince, who loves her too tenderly not to do what she wishes immediately."

"Well, that will do charmingly," said the count; "but may I beg that the greatest haste may be made, for I have reasons for wishing the vicomte not to sleep longer than to-morrow night in Paris?"

"Do you wish it known that you are interested about him, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Better for him, in future, that he should be supposed never to have seen me."

"Oh, sir!" cried Raoul.

"You know, Bragelonne," said Athos, "I never act without reflection."

"Well, comte, I am going instantly," interrupted the duchess, "to send for the Prince de Marsillac, who is, happily, in Paris just now. What are you going to do this evening?"

"We intend to visit the Abbé Scarron, for whom I have a letter of introduction, and at whose house I expect to meet some of my friends."

"'Tis well; I shall go there also, for a few minutes," said the duchess; "do not quit his *salon* until you have seen me."

Athos bowed, and took his departure.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ABBÉ SCARRON.

THERE was once, in the Rue des Tournelles, a house known by all the sedan chairmen and footmen of Paris, and yet, nevertheless, this house was neither that of a great lord, nor of a rich man. There was neither dining, nor playing at cards, nor dancing in that house. Nevertheless, it was the rendezvous of all the great world, and all Paris went there. It was the abode of little Scarron.

There, in the home of that witty abbé, there was incessant laughter; there all the news of the day had their source, and were so quickly transformed, misrepresented, and converted, some into epigrams, some into falsehoods, that every one was anxious to pass an hour with little Scarron, listening to what he said, and reporting it to others.

The diminutive Abbé Scarron, who, however, was only an abbé because he owned an abbey, and not because he was in

orders, had formerly been one of the gayest prebendaries of the town of Maur, which he inhabited. But he had become lame; every means had been in vain employed to restore the use of his limbs. He had been subjected to a severe discipline: at length he sent away all his doctors, declaring that he preferred the disease to the treatment, and came to Paris, where the fame of his wit had preceded him. There he had a chair made on his own plan; and one day, visiting Anne of Austria in this chair, she asked him, charmed as she was with his wit, if he did not wish for a title.

"Yes, your majesty, there is a title which I covet much," replied Scarron.

"And what is that?"

"That of being *your* invalid," answered Scarron.

So he was called the queen's invalid, with a pension of fifteen hundred francs.

From that lucky moment Scarron led a happy life, spending both income and principal. One day, however, an emissary of the cardinal's gave him to understand that he was wrong in receiving the coadjutor so often.

"And why?" asked Scarron; "is he not a man of good birth?"

"Certainly."

"Agreeable?"

"Undeniably."

"Witty?"

"He has, unluckily, too much wit."

"Well, then, why do you wish me to give up seeing such a man?"

"Because he is an enemy."

"Of whom?"

"Of the cardinal."

"How?" answered Scarron; "I continue to receive Monsieur Gilles Despreaux, who thinks ill of me, and you wish me to give up seeing the coadjutor, because he thinks ill of another man."

Now, the very morning of which we speak was that of his quarter-day's payment, and Scarron, as usual, had sent his servant to fetch his money at the pension-office, but he had returned, and said that the government had no more money to give Monsieur Scarron.

It was a Thursday, the abbé's day of reception; people went there in crowds. The cardinal's refusal to pay the pension was known about the town in half an hour, and he was abused with vehemence.

Athos made two visits in Paris; at seven o'clock he and Raoul directed their steps to the Rue des Tournelles; it was stopped up by porters, horses, and footmen. Athos forced his way through and entered, followed by the young man. The first person that struck him on his entrance was Aramis, planted near a great chair on castors, very large, covered with a canopy of tapestry, under which there moved, enveloped in a quilt of brocade, a little face, rather young, rather merry, but somewhat pallid—while its eyes never ceased to express a sentiment at once lively, intellectual, and amiable. This was the Abbé Scarron, always laughing, joking, complimenting—yet suffering—and scratching himself with a little switch.

Around this kind of rolling tent pressed a crowd of gentlemen and ladies. The room was neat and comfortably furnished. Large vallances of silk, embroidered with flowers of gay colors, which were rather faded, fell from the wide windows; the fitting-up of the room was simple, but in good taste. Two men servants, well trained, attended on the company. On perceiving Athos, Aramis advanced toward him, took him by the hand, and presented him to Scarron. Raoul remained silent, for he was not prepared for the dignity of the "*bel esprit*."

After some minutes the door opened, and a footman announced Mademoiselle Paulet.

Athos touched the shoulder of the vicomte.

"Look at this lady, Raoul, she is an historic personage; it was to visit her that King Henry IV. was going when he was assassinated."

Every one thronged round Mademoiselle Paulet, for she was always much in fashion. She was a tall woman, with a wavy and slender figure, and a forest of golden curls, such as Raphael was fond of, and as Titian has painted all his Magdalens with. This fawn-colored hair—or, perhaps, the sort of ascendancy which she had over other women—gave her the name of "*La Lionne*."

Mademoiselle Paulet took her accustomed seat; but before sitting down, she cast, in all her queenlike grandeur, a look round the room—and her eyes rested on Raoul.

Athos smiled.

"Mademoiselle Paulet has observed you, vicomte; go and bow to her; don't try to appear anything but what you are—a true country youth—on no account speak to her of Henry IV."

"When shall we two talk together?" Athos then said to Aramis.

"Presently—there are not a sufficient number of people here yet—we shall be remarked."

At this moment the door opened, and in walked the coadjutor.

At this name every one looked round, for it was already a name very celebrated. Athos did the same. He knew the Abbé de Gondy only by report.

He saw a little dark man, ill-made and awkward with his hands in everything—except when drawing a sword and firing a pistol, and with something haughty and contemptuous in his face.

Scarron turned round toward him, and came to meet him in his chair.

"Well," said the coadjutor on seeing him, "you are in disgrace, then, abbé?"

This was the orthodox phrase. It had been said that evening a hundred times—and Scarron was at his hundredth "bon-mot" on the subject—he was very near stopping short, but one despairing effort saved him.

"Monsieur, the Cardinal Mazarin has been so kind as to think of me," he said.

"But how can you continue to receive us?" asked the coadjutor, "if your income is lessened, I shall be obliged to make you a canon of Notre Dame."

"Oh, no," cried Scarron, "I should compromise you too much."

"Perhaps you have resources of which we are ignorant?"

"I shall borrow from the queen."

"But her majesty has no property," interposed Aramis.

At this moment the door opened, and Madame de Chevreuse was announced. Every one rose. Scarron turned his chair toward the door; Raoul blushed; Athos made a sign to Aramis, who went to hide himself in the inclosure of a window.

In the midst of all the compliments that awaited her on her entrance, the duchess seemed to be looking for some one: at last she found out Raoul, and her eyes sparkled; she perceived Athos, and became thoughtful; she saw Aramis in the seclusion of the window, and gave a start of surprise behind her fan.

"Apropos," she said, as if to drive away thoughts that pursued her in spite of herself, "how is poor Voiture; do you know, Scarron?"

"What! is Monsieur Voiture ill?" inquired a gentleman who had spoken to Athos in the Rue St. Honoré; "what is the matter with him?"

"He was acting—but forgot to take the precaution to have clean linen brought to change," said the coadjutor, "so he took cold, and is going to die."

"Is he then so ill, dear Voiture?" asked Aramis, half hidden by the window curtain.

"He die!" cried Mademoiselle Paulet bitterly; "he! why he is surrounded by sultanas, like a Turk. Madame de Saintot has hastened to him with broth; La Renaudet warms his sheets; the Marquise de Rambouillet sends him his 'tisanes.'"

"You don't like him, my dear Parthenie," said Scarron.

"What an injustice, my dear invalid! I hate him so little, that I should be delighted to order masses for the repose of his soul."

"You are not called 'Lionne' for nothing," observed Madame de Chevreuse, "you bite most cruelly."

"You are unjust to a great poet, so it seems to me," Raoul ventured to say.

"A great poet! he! come, one may easily see, vicomte, that you are lately from the provinces, and have never seen him. A great poet! he is scarcely five feet high."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried a tall man with an enormous mustache and a long rapier, "bravo, fair Paulet, it is high time to put little Voiture in his right place. For my part I always thought his poetry detestable, and I think I know something about poetry."

"Who is this officer," inquired Raoul, of Athos, "who is speaking?"

"Monsieur de Scudery, the author of 'Delia,' and of 'Le Grand Cyrus,' which were composed partly by him, and partly by his sister, who is now talking to that pretty person yonder, near Monsieur Scarron."

Raoul turned, and saw two new faces just arrived. One was perfectly charming, delicate, pensive, shaded by beautiful dark hair, with eyes soft as velvet, like those lovely flowers—the heart's-ease, under which shine the golden petals. The other, of mature age, seemed to have the former one under her charge—and was cold, dry, and yellow—the true type of a duenna or a devotee.

Raoul resolved not to quit the room without having spoken to the beautiful girl with the soft eyes, who by a strange fancy—although she bore no resemblance—reminded him of his poor little Louise, whom he had left in the Château de la Vallière, and whom, in the midst of all the party he had never one moment forgotten. Meantime Aramis had drawn

near to the coadjutor, who, smiling all the while, had contrived to drop some words into his ear. Raoul, following the advice of Athos, went toward them. Athos had now joined the other two, and they were in deep consultation as the youth approached them.

"'Tis a rouleau by Monsieur Voiture that Monsieur l'Abbé is repeating to me," said Athos in a loud voice, "and I confess I think it incomparable."

Raoul stayed only a few minutes near them, and then mingled in the group around Madame de Chevreuse.

"Well, then," asked Athos, in a low tone, as soon as the three friends were unobserved, "to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow," said Aramis quickly, "at six o'clock."

"Where?"

"At St. Maude."

"Who told you?"

"The Count de Rochefort."

Some one drew near.

"And then philosophic ideas are wholly wanting in Voiture's works—but I am of the same opinion as the coadjutor—he is a poet, a true poet." Aramis spoke so as to be heard by everybody.

"And I too," murmured the young lady with the velvet eyes; "I have the misfortune also to admire his poetry extremely."

"Monsieur Scarron, do me the honor," said Raoul, blushing, "to tell me the name of that young lady whose opinion seems so different to that of the others of the company generally."

"Ah! my young vicomte," replied Scarron, "I suppose you wish to propose to her an alliance offensive and defensive."

Raoul blushed again.

"You asked the name of that young lady. She is called the fair Indian."

"Excuse me, sir," returned Raoul, blushing still more deeply, "I know no more than I did before. Alas! I am from the country."

"Which means that you know very little about the nonsense which flows here, down our streets. So much the better, young man! so much the better! Don't try to understand it—you will only lose your time."

"You forgive me then, sir," said Raoul; "and you will deign to tell me who is the person that you call the young Indian?"

"Certainly; one of the most charming persons that lives—Mademoiselle Frances d'Aubigné."

"Does she belong to the family of the celebrated Agrippus, the friend of Henry IV.?"

"His granddaughter. She comes from Martinique, so I call her the beautiful Indian."

Raoul looked surprised, and his eyes met those of the young lady, who smiled.

The company went on speaking of the poet Voiture.

"Monsieur," said Mademoiselle d'Aubigné to Scarron, as if she wished to join in the conversation he was engaged in with Raoul, "do you not admire Monsieur Voiture's friends? Listen how they pull him to pieces, even while they praise him; one takes away from him all claim to good sense, another runs off with his poetry, another with his originality, another with his humor, another with his independence of character, another—but, good heavens! what will they leave him? as Mademoiselle de Scudery remarks."

Scarron and Raoul laughed. The fair Indian, astonished at the sensation her observations produced, looked down and resumed her air of "naïveté."

Athos—still within the enclosure of the window—watched this scene with a smile of disdain on his lips.

"Tell the Count de la Fère to come to me," said Madame de Chevreuse, "I want to speak to him."

"And I," said the coadjutor, "want it to be thought that I do *not* speak to him. I admire, I love him—for I know his former adventures—but I shall not speak to him until the day after to-morrow."

"And what then?" asked Madame de Chevreuse.

"You shall know to-morrow evening," replied the coadjutor, laughing.

Athos then drew near her.

"Monsieur le Comte," said the duchess, giving him a letter, "here is what I promised you; our young friend will be extremely well received."

"Madame, he is very happy in owing any obligation to you."

Madame de Chevreuse rose to depart.

"Vicomte," said Athos to Raoul, "follow the duchess; beg her to do you the favor to take your arm in going downstairs, and thank her as you descend."

The fair Indian approached Scarron.

"You are going already?" he said.

"One of the last, as you see; if you hear anything of Monsieur Voiture, be so kind as to send me word to-morrow."

"Oh!" said Scarron, "he may die now."

"Why?" asked the young girl with the velvet eyes.

"Certainly—his pynegyric has been uttered."

They parted, laughing; she turning back to gaze at the poor paralytic man with interest, he looking after her with eyes of love.

So the invalid disappeared soon afterward, and went into his sleeping-room; and one by one the lights in the salon of La Rue des Tournelles were extinguished.

CHAPTER XXII.

SAINT DENIS.

THE day had begun to break when Athos rose and dressed himself; it was plain, by the paleness still greater than usual, and by those traces which loss of sleep leaves on the face, that he must have passed almost the whole of the night without sleeping. Contrary to the custom of a man so firm and decided, there was this morning in his personal appearance something slow and irresolute. He was evidently occupying himself in preparations for the departure of Raoul; after employing nearly an hour in these cares, he opened the door of the room in which the vicomte slept, and entered.

The sun, already high, penetrated into the room through the window, the curtains of which Raoul had neglected to close on the previous evening. He was still sleeping, his head gracefully reposing on his arm.

Athos approached and hung over the youth in an attitude full of tender melancholy; he looked long on this young man, whose smiling mouth, and half-closed eyes, bespoke soft dreams and light slumbers, as if his guardian angel watched over him with solicitude and affection. By degrees Athos gave himself up to the charms of his reverie in the proximity of youth, so pure, so fresh. His own youth seemed to reappear, bringing with it all those soft remembrances, which are like perfumes more than thoughts. Between the past and the present there was an abyss. But imagination has the flight of an angel of light, and travels over the seas where we have been almost shipwrecked—the darkness in which our associations are lost—the precipice, whence our happiness has been hurled and swallowed up. He remembered that all the first part of his life had been embittered by a woman, and he

thought with alarm of the influence which love might possess over so fine, and at the same time so vigorous an organization as that of Raoul.

In recalling all that he had suffered, he foresaw all that Raoul would suffer; and the expression of the deep and tender compassion which throbbed in his heart was pictured in the moist eye with which he gazed on the young man.

At this moment Raoul awoke, without a cloud on his face—without weariness or lassitude; his eyes were fixed on those of Athos, and he, perhaps, comprehended all that passed in the heart of the man who was awaiting his awakening as a lover awaits the awakening of his mistress, for his glance, in return, had all the tenderness of infinite love.

"You are there, sir," he said respectfully.

"Yes, Raoul," replied the count.

"And you did not awaken me?"

"I wished to leave you still to enjoy some moments of sleep, my child; you must be fatigued from yesterday."

"Oh, sir! how good you are!"

Athos smiled.

"How are you?" he said.

"Perfectly well; quite rested, sir."

"You are still growing," Athos continued, with that charming and paternal interest felt by a grown man for a youth.

"Oh, sir! I beg your pardon," exclaimed Raoul, ashamed of so much attention; "in an instant, I shall be dressed."

Athos then called Olivain.

"Everything," said Olivain to Athos, "has been done according to your directions; the horses are waiting."

"And I was asleep!" cried Raoul; "while you, sir, you had the kindness to attend to all these details. Truly, sir, you overwhelm me with benefits!"

"Therefore you love me a little, I hope," replied Athos, in a tone of emotion.

"Oh, sir! God knows that I love, I revere you."

"See that you forget nothing!" said Athos, appearing to look about him that he might hide his emotion.

"No, indeed, sir," answered Raoul.

The servant then approached Athos, and said hesitatingly;

"Monsieur le Vicomte has no sword."

"Tis well," said Athos. "I will take care of that."

They went downstairs; Raoul looking every now and then at the count to see if the moment of farewell was at hand, but Athos was silent. When they reached the steps, Raoul saw three horses.

"Oh, sir! then you are going with me?"

"I shall conduct you part of the way," said Athos.

They set out, passing over the Pont Neuf; they pursued their way along the quay then called L'Abreuvoir Pepin, and went along by the walls of the Grand Châtelet. They proceeded to the Rue St. Denis.

After passing through the Porte Saint Denis, Athos looked at Raoul's horse, and said:

"Take care, Raoul! I have already often told you of this; you must not forget it, for it is a great defect in a rider. See! your horse is tired already, he froths at the mouth, while mine looks as if he had only just left the stable. You hold the bit too tight, and so make his mouth hard; so that you will not be able to make him maneuver quickly. The safety of a cavalier often depends on the prompt obedience of his horse. In a week, remember, you will no longer be performing your maneuvers, as a practice, but on a field of battle."

Then, suddenly, in order not to give too sad an importance to this observation:

"See, Raoul!" he resumed; "what a fine plain for partridge shooting! I have remarked also another thing," said Athos, "which is, that in firing off your pistol, you hold your arm too much stretched out. This tension lessens the accuracy of the aim. So, in twelve times you thrice missed the mark."

"Which you, sir, struck twelve times," answered Raoul, smiling.

"Because I bent my arm, and rested my hand on my elbow—so—do you understand what I mean?"

"Yes, sir. I fired since in that manner, and was completely successful."

"What a cold wind!" resumed Athos. "A wintry blast. Apropos, if you fire—and you will do so, for you are recommended to a young general who is very fond of powder—remember in single combat (which often takes place in the cavalry) never to fire the first shot. He who fires the first shot rarely hits his man, for he fires with the apprehension of being disarmed before an armed foe; then, while he fires, make your horse rear; that maneuver has saved my life several times."

"I shall do so, if only in gratitude for——"

"Eh!" cried Athos, "are not those poachers whom they have arrested yonder? They are. Then another important thing, Raoul; should you be wounded in a battle, and fall from your horse—if you have any strength left, disentangle yourself from the line that your regiment has formed; other-

wise, it may be driven back, and you will be trampled to death by the horses. At all events, if you should be wounded, write to me the very instant, or make some one write to me. We are judges of wounds, we old soldiers," Athos added, smiling.

"Thank you, sir," answered the young man, much moved.

They arrived that very moment at the gate of the town, guarded by two sentinels.

"Here comes a young gentleman," said one of them, "who seems as if he were going to join the army."

"How do you find that out?" inquired Athos.

"By his manner, sir, and his age; he's the second to-day."

"Has a young man, such as I am, gone through this morning, then?" asked Raoul.

"Faith, yes, with a haughty presence and fine equipage; such as the son of a noble house would have."

"He was to be my companion on the journey, sir," cried Raoul. "Alas! he cannot make me forget what I shall have lost!"

Thus talking, they traversed the streets, full of people on account of the fête, and arrived opposite the old cathedral where the first mass was going on.

"Let us alight, Raoul," said Athos. "Olivain, take care of our horses, and give me my sword."

The two gentlemen then went into the church. Athos gave Raoul some of the holy water. A love as tender as that of a lover for his mistress dwells, undoubtedly, in some paternal hearts for a son.

"Come Raoul," he said, "let us follow this man."

The verger opened the iron grating which guarded the royal tombs, and stood on the topmost step, while Athos and Raoul descended. The depths of the sepulchral descent were dimly lighted by a silver lamp, on the lowest step; and just below this lamp there was laid, wrapped in a large mantle of violet velvet, worked with fleurs-de-lis of gold, a catafalque resting upon trestles of oak.

The young man, prepared for the scene by the state of his own feelings, which were mournful, and by the majesty of the cathedral, which he had passed through, had descended in a slow and solemn manner, and stood with his head uncovered before these mortal spoils of the last king, who was not to be placed by the side of his forefathers until his successor should take his place there; and who appeared to abide on that spot, that he might thus address human pride, so sure to be exalted by the glories of a throne: "Dust of the earth! I await thee!"

There was a profound silence.

Then Athos raised his hand, and pointing to the coffin—

"This temporary sepulcher is," he said, "that of a man of feeble mind; yet whose reign was full of great events; because, over this king watched the spirit of another man, even as this lamp keeps vigil over this coffin, and illumines it. He whose intellect was thus supreme, was, Raoul, the actual sovereign; the other, nothing but a phantom to whom he gave a soul; and yet, so powerful is majesty among us, this man has not even the honor of a tomb even at the feet of him in whose service his life was worn away. Remember, Raoul, this: If Richelieu made the king by comparison, small, he made royalty great. The palace of the Louvre contains two things—the king, who must die—and royalty, which dieth not. The minister, so feared, so hated by his master, has descended into the tomb, drawing after him the king—whom he would not leave alone on earth, lest he should destroy what he had done. So blind were his contemporaries that they regarded the cardinal's death as a deliverance: and, I, even I, opposed the designs of the great man who held the destinies of France in his hands. Raoul, learn how to distinguish the king from royalty; the king is but a man; royalty is the gift of God. Whenever you hesitate as to whom you ought to serve, abandon the exterior, the material appearance, for the invisible principle; for the invisible principle is everything. Raoul, I seem to read your future destiny as through a cloud. It will be happier, I think, than ours has been. Different in your fate to us—you will have a king without a minister, whom you may serve, love, respect. Should the king prove a tyrant, for power begets tyranny, serve, love, respect royalty, that Divine right, that celestial spark which makes this dust still powerful and holy, so that we—gentlemen, nevertheless, of rank and condition—are as nothing in comparison with that cold corpse extended here."

"I shall adore God, sir," said Raoul. "I shall respect royalty, I shall serve the king, and I shall, if death be my lot, hope to die for the king, for royalty, and for God. Have I, sir, comprehended your instructions?"

Athos smiled.

"Yours is a noble nature," he said; "here is your sword."

Raoul bent his knee to the ground.

"It was worn by my father, a loyal gentleman. I have worn it in my turn, and it has sometimes not been disgraced when the hilt was in my hand, and the sheath at my side. Should your hand still be too weak to use this sword, Raoul,

so much the better. You will have more time to learn to draw it only when it ought to be used."

"Sir," replied Raoul, putting the sword to his lips as he received it from the count, "I owe everything to you, and yet this sword is the most precious gift you have made me. I shall wear it, I swear to you, as a grateful man should do."

"'Tis well—arise, vicomte, embrace me."

Raoul rose, and threw himself with emotion into the count's arms.

"Adieu," faltered the count, who felt his heart die away within him; "adieu, and think of me."

"Oh! forever and ever!" cried the youth; "oh! I swear to you, sir, should any harm happen to me, your name shall be the last that I shall utter—the remembrance of you, my last thought."

Athos hastened upstairs to conceal his emotion, and regained, with hurried steps, the porch where Olivain was waiting with the horses.

"Olivain," said Athos, showing the servant Raoul's shoulder-belt; "tighten the buckle of this sword, which falls a little too low. You will accompany Monsieur de Vicomte till Grimaud has rejoined you. You know, Raoul, Grimaud is an old and zealous servant, he will follow you."

"Yes, sir," answered Raoul.

"Now to horse, that I may see you depart."

Raoul obeyed.

"Adieu, Raoul," said the count; "adieu, my dear boy!"

"Adieu, sir—adieu—my beloved protector."

Athos waved his hand; he dared not trust himself to speak, and Raoul went away, his head uncovered. Athos remained motionless, looking after him until he turned the corner of the street.

Then the count threw the bridle of his horse into the hands of a peasant, mounted again the steps, went into the cathedral, there to kneel down in the darkest corner, and to pray.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE OF THE FORTY METHODS OF ESCAPE OF THE DUC DE BEAUFORT.

THE game at tennis, which, upon a sign from Grimaud, Monsieur de Beaufort had consented to play, began in the

afternoon. The duke was in full force, and beat La Ramée completely.

Four of the guards, who were constantly near the prisoner, assisted in picking up the tennis balls. When the game was over, the duke, laughing at La Ramée for his bad play, offered these men two louis-d'or to go and drink his health, with their four other comrades.

The guards asked permission of La Ramée, who gave it to them, but not till the evening, however—until then he had business, and the prisoner was not to be left alone.

Six o'clock came, and, although they were not to sit down to table until seven o'clock, dinner was ready, and served up. Upon a sideboard appeared the colossal pie with the duke's arms on it, and, seemingly, cooked to a turn, as far as one could judge by the golden color which illumined the crust.

The rest of the dinner was to come.

Every one was impatient; La Ramée to sit down to table—the guards to go and drink—the duke to escape.

Grimaud alone was calm as ever. One might have fancied that Athos had educated him with a forethought of this great event.

There were moments when, looking at Grimaud, the duke asked himself if he was not dreaming, and if that marble figure was really at his service, and would become animate when the moment arrived for action.

La Ramée sent away the guards, desiring them to drink to the duke's health, and, as soon as they were gone, he shut all the doors, put the keys in his pocket, and showed the table to the prince with an air which meant—

“Whenever my lord pleases.”

The prince looked at Grimaud—Grimaud looked at the clock—it was hardly a quarter-past six. The escape was fixed to take place at seven o'clock. There were, therefore, three-quarters of an hour to wait.

The duke, in order to delay a quarter of an hour, pretended to be reading something that interested him, and said he wished they would allow him to finish his chapter. La Ramée went up to him and looked over his shoulder to see what book it was that had so singular an influence over the prisoner as to make him put off taking his dinner.

It was “*Cæsar's Commentaries*,” which La Ramée had lent him, contrary to the orders of the governor; and La Ramée resolved never again to disobey those injunctions.

Meantime he uncorked the bottles, and went to smell if the pie was good.

At half-past six the duke arose, and said very gravely:

"Certainly, Cæsar was the greatest man of ancient times."

"You think so, my lord?" answered La Ramée.

"Yes."

"Well, as for me, I prefer Hannibal."

"And why, pray, Master La Ramée?" asked the duke.

"Because he left no Commentaries," replied La Ramée, with his coarse laugh.

The duke offered no reply, but sitting down at the table, made a sign that La Ramée should also seat himself opposite to him. There is nothing so expressive as the face of an epicure who finds himself before a well-spread table: so La Ramée, when receiving his plate of soup from Grimaud, presented a type of perfect bliss.

The duke smiled.

"Zounds!" he said; "I don't suppose there is a happier man at this moment in the kingdom than you are!"

"You are right, my lord duke," answered the officer; I don't know a pleasanter sight than a well-covered table; and when, added to that, he who does the honors is the grandson of Henry IV., you will, my lord duke, easily comprehend that the honor one receives doubles the pleasure one enjoys."

The duke bowed in his turn, and an imperceptible smile appeared on the face of Grimaud, who kept behind La Ramée.

"My dear La Ramée," said the duke, "you're the only man who can turn a compliment as you do."

"No, my lord duke," replied La Ramée, in the fullness of his heart; "I say what I think—there is no compliment in what I say to you——"

"Then you are attached to me?" asked the duke.

"To own the truth, I should be inconsolable if you were to leave Vincennes."

"A droll way of showing your affliction." The duke meant to say "affection."

"But, my lord," returned La Ramée; "what would you do if you got out? Every folly you committed would embroil you with the court, and they would put you into the Bastille, instead of Vincennes. Now, Monsieur de Chavigny is not amiable, I allow; but Monsieur du Tremblay is much worse."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the duke, who from time to time looked at the clock, the fingers of which seemed to move with a sickening slowness; "but what could you expect from the brother of a Capuchin monk, brought up in the school of Cardinal Richelieu?"

"Ah, my lord, it is a great happiness that the queen, who always wished you well, had a fancy to send you here, where there's a promenade and a tennis court, good air, and a good table."

"In short," answered the duke, "if I comprehend you, La Ramée, I am ungrateful for having ever thought of leaving this place?"

"Oh! my lord duke, 'tis the height of ingratitude; but your highness has never seriously thought of it?"

"Yes," returned the duke; "I must confess I do sometimes think of it."

"Still by one of your forty methods, your highness?"

"Yes—yes, indeed."

"My lord," said La Ramée, "now we are quite at our ease, and enjoying ourselves, pray tell me one of those forty ways invented by your highness."

"Willingly," answered the duke; "give me the pie!"

"I am listening," said La Ramée, leaning back in his arm-chair, and raising his glass of Madeira to his lips, and winking his eye that he might see the sun through the rich liquid that he was about to taste.

The duke glanced at the clock. In ten minutes it would strike seven.

Grimaud placed the pie before the duke, who took a knife with a silver blade to raise the upper crust; but La Ramée, who was afraid of any harm happening to this fine work of art, passed his knife, which had an iron blade, to the duke.

"Thank you, La Ramée," said the prisoner.

"Well, my lord! this famous invention of yours?"

"Must I tell you," replied the duke, "on what I most reckon, and what I determine to try first?"

"Yes, that one! my lord."

"Well—I should hope, in the first instance, to have as a keeper an honest fellow, like you."

"And you have one, my lord—well?"

"Having then a keeper like La Ramée, I should try also to have introduced to me by some friend a man who would be devoted to me, and who would assist me in my flight."

"Come, come," said La Ramée, "not a bad idea."

"Isn't it? For instance, the former serving man of some brave gentleman, an enemy himself to Mazarin, as every gentleman ought to be."

"Hush—don't let us talk politics, my lord!"

"Then my keeper will begin to trust this man, and to depend upon him; and then I shall have news from those without the prison walls."

"Ah, yes! but how can the news be brought to you?"

"Nothing easier—in a game of tennis. I send a ball into the moat; a man is there who picks it up; the ball contains a letter."

"The devil it does! The devil it does!" said La Ramée, scratching his head; "you are wrong to tell me that, my lord. I shall watch the men who pick up balls."

The duke smiled.

"But," resumed La Ramée, "that is only one way of corresponding."

"'Tis a good one, it seems to me."

"But not a sure one."

"Pardon me. For instance, I say to my friends, Be on a certain day, on a certain hour, at the other side of the moat, with two horses."

"Well, what then?"—La Ramée began to be uneasy—"unless the horses have wings to mount up to the ramparts and to come and fetch you."

"That's not needed. I have," replied the duke, "a way of descending from the ramparts."

"What?"

"A ladder of ropes."

"Yes—but," answered La Ramée, trying to laugh, "a ladder of ropes can't be sent round a ball like a letter."

"No; but it can come in another way—in a pie, for instance," replied the duke. "The guards are away. Grimaud is here alone; and Grimaud is the man whom a friend has sent to second me in everything. The moment for my escape is fixed—seven o'clock. Well, at a few minutes to seven——"

"At a few minutes to seven?" cried La Ramée, the cold sweat on his brow.

"At a few minutes to seven," returned the duke (suiting the action to the words), "I raise the crust of the pie. I find in it two poniards, a ladder of ropes, and a gag. I point one of the poniards at La Ramée's breast, and I say to him, 'My friend, I am sorry for it; but if thou stirrest, if thou utterest a cry, thou art a dead man!'"

The duke, in pronouncing these words, suited, as we have before said, the action to the words. He was standing near the officer, and he directed the point of the poniard in such a manner, close to La Ramée's heart, that there could be no doubt in the mind of that individual as to his determination. Meanwhile, Grimaud, still mute as ever, drew from the pie the other sword, the rope-ladder, and the gag.

La Ramée followed all these objects with his eyes; his alarm every moment increasing.

"Oh, my lord!" he cried, with an expression of stupefaction in his face; "you haven't the heart to kill me!"

"No; not if thou dost not oppose my flight."

"But, my lord, if I let you escape, I am a ruined man."

"I shall compensate thee for the loss of thy place."

"You are determined to leave the château?"

"By heaven and earth! This evening I shall be free."

"And if I defend myself, or call, or cry out?"

"I shall kill thee; on the honor of a gentleman, I shall."

At this moment the clock struck.

"Seven o'clock!" said Grimaud, who had not spoken a word.

La Ramée made one movement, in order to satisfy his conscience. The duke frowned; the officer felt the point of the poniard, which, having penetrated through his clothes, was close to his heart.

"Let us despatch," said the duke.

"My lord—one last favor."

"What? speak—make haste."

"Bind my arms, my lord, fast."

"Why bind thee?"

"That I may not be considered as your accomplice."

"Your hands?" asked Grimaud.

"Not before me, behind me."

"But with what?" asked the duke.

"With your belt, my lord," replied La Ramée.

The duke undid his belt and gave it to Grimaud, who tied La Ramée in such a way as to satisfy him.

"Your feet also," said Grimaud.

La Ramée stretched out his legs, Grimaud took a napkin, tore it into strips, and tied La Ramée's feet together.

"Now, my lord," said the poor man, "let me have the *poire d'angoisse*. I ask for it; without it I should be tried in a court of justice because I did not cry out. Thrust it into my mouth, my lord, thrust it in."

Grimaud prepared to comply with this request, when the officer made a sign as if he had something to say.

"Speak," said the duke.

"Now, my lord, do not forget, if any harm happens to me, on your account, that I have a wife and four children."

"Rest assured—put the gag in, Grimaud."

In a second La Ramée was gagged, and laid prostrate. Two or three chairs were thrown down, as if there had been a

struggle. Grimaud then took from the pocket of the officer all the keys it contained, and first opened the door of the room in which they were, then shut it, and double-locked it, and both he and the duke proceeded rapidly down the gallery, which led to the little inclosure. At last they reached the tennis-court. It was completely deserted. No sentinels—no one at the windows.

The duke ran on to the rampart, and perceived, on the other side of the ditch, three cavaliers with two riding horses. The duke exchanged a signal with them. It was well for him that they were there.

Grimaud, meantime, undid the means of escape.

This was not, however, a rope-ladder, but a ball of silk cord, with a narrow board, which was to pass between the legs and to unwind itself by the weight of the person who sat astride upon the board.

“Go!” said the duke.

“The first, my lord?” inquired Grimaud.

“Certainly. If I am caught, I risk nothing but being taken back again to prison. If they catch thee, thou wilt be hung.”

“True,” replied Grimaud.

And, instantly, Grimaud, sitting upon the board, as if on horseback, commenced his perilous descent.

The duke followed him with his eyes with involuntary terror. He had gone down about three-quarters of the length of the wall, when the cord broke. Grimaud fell—precipitated into the moat.

The duke uttered a cry, but Grimaud did not give a single moan. He must have been dreadfully hurt, for he did not stir from the place where he fell.

Immediately, one of the men who were waiting, slipped down into the moat, tied under Grimaud’s shoulders the end of a cord, and the other two, who held the other end, drew Grimaud to them.

“Descend, my lord,” said the man in the moat. “There are only fifteen feet more from the top down here, and the grass is soft.”

The duke had already begun to descend. His task was the more difficult, as there was no board to support him. He was obliged to let himself down by his hands, and from a height of fifty feet. But, as we have said, he was active, strong, and full of presence of mind. In less than five minutes he arrived at the end of the cord. He was then only fifteen feet from the ground, as the gentleman below had told him. He let go

the rope, and fell upon his feet, without receiving any injury.

He instantly began to climb up the slope of the moat, on the top of which he met De Rochefort. The other two gentlemen were unknown to him. Grimaud, in a swoon, was tied on to a horse.

"Gentlemen," said the duke, "I shall thank you later: now we have not a moment to lose. On, then! on! those who love me, follow me!"

And he jumped on his horse, and set off on full gallop, drawing in the fresh air, and crying out, with an expression of face which it would be impossible to describe:

"Free! free! free!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TIMELY ARRIVAL OF D'ARTAGNAN IN PARIS.

AT BLOIS D'Artagnan received the money paid to him by Mazarin for any future services he might render the cardinal.

From Blois to Paris was a journey of four days for ordinary travelers, but D'Artagnan arrived on the third day at the Barrière Saint Denis. In turning the corner of the Rue Montmartre, in order to reach the Rue Tiquetonne and the Hotel de la Chevette, where he had appointed Porthos to meet him, he saw, at one of the windows of the hotel, his friend Porthos, dressed in a sky-blue waistcoat, embroidered with silver, and gaping, till he showed all down his throat; while the people passing by admiringly gazed at this gentleman, so handsome and so rich, who seemed so weary of his riches and his greatness.

Porthos, seeing D'Artagnan, hastened to receive him on the threshold of the hotel.

"Ah! my dear friend!" he cried, "what bad stabling for my horses here!"

"Indeed!" said D'Artagnan; "I am most unhappy to hear it, on account of those fine animals."

"And I also—I was also wretchedly off," he answered, moving backward and forward as he spoke—"and had it not been for the hostess," he added, with his air of vulgar self-complacency, "who is very agreeable, and understands a joke, I should have got a lodging elsewhere."

"Yes, I understand," said D'Artagnan, "the air of La

Rue Titquetonne is not like that of Pierrefonds; but console yourself, I shall soon conduct you to one much better."

Then, taking Porthos aside:

"My dear De Valon," he said, "here you are in full dress most fortunately, for I shall take you directly to the cardinal's."

"Gracious me!—really!" cried Porthos, opening his great, wondering eyes.

"Yes, my friend."

"A presentation?—indeed!"

"Does that alarm you?"

"No; but it agitates me."

"Oh! don't be distressed; you have not to deal with the other cardinal; and this one will not oppress you by his dignity."

"'Tis the same thing—you understand me, D'Artagnan—a court."

"There's no court now. Alas!"

"The queen!"

"I was going to say, there's no longer a queen. The queen! Be assured we shall not see her."

"But you, my friend; are you not going to change your dress?"

"No, I shall go as I am. This traveling dress will show the cardinal my haste to obey his commands."

They set out on Vulcan and Bayard, followed by Mousqueton and Phœbus, and arrived at the Palais Royal at about a quarter to seven. The streets were crowded, for it was the day of Pentecost—and the crowd looked in wonder at these two cavaliers; one as fresh as if he had come out of a band-box, the other so covered with dust that he looked as if he had come from a field of battle.

Mousqueton also attracted attention; and as the romance of Don Quixote was then the fashion, they said that he was Sancho, who, after having lost one master, had found two.

On reaching the palace, D'Artagnan sent in to his eminence the letter in which he had been ordered to return without delay. He was soon ordered to enter into the presence of the cardinal.

"Courage!" he whispered to Porthos, as they proceeded. "Do not be intimidated. Believe me, the eye of the eagle is closed forever. We have only the vulture to deal with. Hold yourself up as stiff as on the day of the bastion of Saint Gervais; and do not bend too low to this Italian: that might give him a poor idea of us."

"Good!" answered Porthos. "Good."

Mazarin was in his study, working at a list of pensions and benefices, of which he was trying to reduce the number. He saw D'Artagnan and Porthos enter with pleasure, yet showed no joy in his countenance.

"Ah! you, is it? Monsieur le Lieutenant, you have been very prompt. 'Tis well. Welcome to ye."

"Thanks, my lord. Here I am at your eminence's service, as well as Monsieur de Valon, one of my old friends, who used to conceal his nobility under the name of Porthos."

Porthos bowed to the cardinal.

"A magnificent cavalier," remarked Mazarin.

Porthos turned his head to the right and to the left, and drew himself up with a movement full of dignity.

"The best swordsman in the kingdom, my lord," said D'Artagnan.

Porthos bowed to his friend.

Mazarin was as fond of fine soldiers as, in later times, Frederick of Prussia used to be. He admired the strong hands, the broad shoulders, and steady eye of Porthos. He seemed to see before him the salvation of his administration, and of the kingdom, sculptured in flesh and bone. He remembered that the old association of musketeers was composed of four persons.

"And your two other friends?" he asked.

Porthos opened his mouth, thinking it a good opportunity to put in a word in his turn; D'Artagnan checked him by a glance from the corner of his eye.

"They are prevented at this moment, but will join us later."

Mazarin coughed a little.

"And this gentleman, being disengaged, takes to the service willingly?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord, and from complete devotion to the cause, for Monsieur de Bracieux is rich."

"Fifty thousand francs a-year," said Porthos.

These were the first words he had spoken.

"From pure zeal?" resumed Mazarin, with his artful smile; "from pure zeal and devotion, then?"

"My lord has, perhaps, no faith in that word," said D'Artagnan.

"Have you, Monsieur le Gascon?" asked Mazarin, supporting his elbows on his desk, and his chin on his hands.

"I," replied the Gascon, "I believe in devotion as a word at one's baptism, for instance, which naturally comes before

one's proper name; every one is naturally more or less devout, certainly; but there should be, at the end of one's devotion, something to gain."

"Your friend, therefore, what does he wish for as the reward of his devotion?"

D'Artagnan was about to explain that the aim and end of the zeal of Porthos, was, that one of his estates should be erected into a barony, when a great noise was heard in the antechamber; at the same time the door of the study was burst open, and a man, covered with dust, rushed into it, exclaiming:

"My lord the cardinal! my lord the cardinal!"

Mazarin thought that some one was going to assassinate him, and he drew back, pushing his chair on the castors. D'Artagnan and Porthos moved so as to plant themselves between the person entering and the cardinal.

"Well, sir," exclaimed Mazarin, "what's the matter? and why do you rush in here as if you were just going into a market-place?"

"My lord," replied the messenger, "I wish to speak to your eminence in secret. I am Monsieur du Poin, an officer in the guards, on duty at the donjon of Vincennes."

Mazarin, perceiving by the paleness and agitation of the messenger that he had something of importance to say, made a sign that D'Artagnan and Porthos should retire.

When they were alone:

"What I have to say is, my lord, that the Duc de Beaufort has contrived to escape from the Château of Vincennes."

Mazarin uttered a cry, and became paler than he who brought this news. He fell, almost fainting, back in his chair.

"Escaped? Monsieur de Beaufort escaped?"

"My lord, I saw him run off from the top of the terrace."

"And you did not fire on him?"

"He was beyond reach of a shot."

"Monsieur de Chavigny—where was he?"

"Absent."

"And La Ramée?"

"He was found locked up in the prisoner's room, a gag in his mouth, and a poniard near him."

"But the man who was under him?"

"Was an accomplice of the duke's, and escaped with him."

Mazarin groaned.

"My lord," said D'Artagnan, advancing toward the cardinal, "it seems to me that your eminence is losing precious

time. It may still be possible to trace the prisoner. France is large; the nearest frontier is sixty leagues distant."

"And who is to pursue him?" cried Mazarin.

"I! Egad! if my lord orders me to pursue the devil, I would do so, and seize him by the horns and bring him back again."

"And I, too," said Porthos.

"Go, then; take what guards you find here, and pursue him."

"You command us, my lord, to do so?"

"And I sign my orders," said Mazarin, taking a piece of paper, and writing some lines; "Monsieur de Valon, your barony is on the back of the Duc de Beaufort's horse; you have nothing to do but to overtake it. As for you, my dear lieutenant, I promise you nothing; but if you bring him back to me, dead or alive, you shall ask all you wish."

"To horse, Porthos!" said D'Artagnan, taking his friend by the hand.

"Here I am," replied Porthos, with his sublime composure.

They descended the great staircase, taking with them all the guards that they found on their road, and crying out, "To horse! To horse!" and they spurred on their horses, which set off along the Rue St. Honoré with the speed of a whirlwind.

"Well, baron! I promised you some good exercise!" said the Gascon.

"Yes, my captain."

As they went, the citizens, awakened, left their doors, and the fierce dogs followed the cavaliers, barking. At the corner of the Cimetière Saint Jean, D'Artagnan upset a man: it was too slight an occurrence to delay people so eager to get on. The troop continued its course as if their steeds were winged.

Alas! there are no unimportant events in this world! and we shall see that this apparently slight one was near endangering the monarchy.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN ADVENTURE ON THE HIGHROAD.

THE musketeers rode the whole length of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and of the road to Vincennes, and soon found themselves out of the town, then in a forest, and then in sight of a village.

From the top of an eminence D'Artagnan perceived a group of people collected on the other side of the moat, in front of that part of the donjon which looks toward Saint Maur. He rode on, convinced that he should in that direction gain intelligence of the fugitive; and he learned from the people that composed that group, that the duke had been pursued without success; that his party consisted of four able men, and one wounded, and that they were two hours and a quarter in advance of their pursuers.

"Only four!" cried D'Artagnan, looking at Porthos; "baron, only four of them!"

Porthos smiled.

"And only two hours and a quarter before us, and we so well mounted, Porthos!"

Porthos sighed, and thought of all that was awaiting his poor horses.

The troop then pursued their course with their wonted ardor; but some of them could no longer sustain this rapidity; three of them stopped after an hour's march and one fell down.

D'Artagnan, who never turned his head, did not perceive it. Porthos told him of it in his calm manner.

"If we can only keep two," said D'Artagnan, "it will be enough, since the duke's troop are only four in number."

And he spurred his horse on.

At the end of another two hours the horses had gone twelve leagues without stopping; their legs began to tremble; and the foam that they shed whitened the doublets of their masters.

"Let us rest here an instant to give these miserable creatures breathing time," said Porthos.

"Let us rather kill them! yes, kill them!" cried D'Artagnan; "I see fresh tracks; 'tis not a quarter of an hour since they passed this place."

In fact, the road was trodden by horses' feet, visible even in the approaching gloom of evening.

They set out; after a run of two leagues, Mousqueton's horse sank.

"Gracious me!" said Porthos, "there's Phœbus ruined."

"The cardinal will pay you a hundred pistoles."

"I'm above that."

"Let us set out then again, on a full gallop."

"Yes, if we can."

But, at last, the lieutenant's horse refused to go on; he could not breathe; one last spur, instead of making him advance made him fall.

"The devil!" exclaimed Porthos, "there's Vulcan foundered."

"Zounds!" cried D'Artagnan, "we must then stop! Give me your horse, Porthos! What the devil are you doing?"

"By Jove, I am falling, or rather Bayard is falling," answered Porthos.

All three then called out, "All's over."

"Hush!" said D'Artagnan.

"What is it?"

"I hear a horse, 'tis on before; it is at a hundred steps from hence, and in advance of us."

There was, in truth, the neighing of a horse heard.

"Sir," said Mousqueton, "at a hundred steps from us there's a little hunting seat."

"Mousqueton, my pistols."

"They are in my hand, sir."

"Porthos, keep yours in your saddle-bags."

"I have them."

"Now, we require horses for the king's service."

"For the king's service," repeated Porthos.

"Then not a word, and to work!"

They went on, through the night, silent as phantoms; they saw a light shine in the midst of some trees.

"There is the house, Porthos," said the Gascon; "let me do what I please, and do you do what I do."

They glided from tree to tree, till they arrived at twenty steps from the house unperceived, and saw, by means of a lantern suspended under a hut, four fine horses. A groom was rubbing them down; near them were saddles and bridles.

"I want to buy thy horses," said D'Artagnan, approaching the groom.

"These horses are not to be sold," was the reply

"I take them, then," said the lieutenant.

And he took hold of one within his reach; his two companions did the same thing.

"Sir," cried the groom, "they have just been six leagues, and have only been unharnessed about half an hour."

"Half an hour's rest is enough," replied the Gascon.

The groom called aloud for help. A kind of steward appeared, just as D'Artagnan and his companions were prepared to mount. The steward wished to expostulate.

"My dear friend," cried the lieutenant, "if you say a word I will blow out your brains."

"But sir," answered the steward, "do you know that these horses belong to Monsieur de Montbazan?"

"So much the better; they must be good animals, then."

"Sir, I shall call my people."

"And I mine; I've ten guards behind me; don't you hear them gallop; and I'm one of the king's musketeers; come Porthos, come Mouston."

They all mounted the horses as quickly as possible.

"Here! here!" cried the steward; "the house servants with the carabines."

"On! on!" cried D'Artagnan; "there'll be firing! on!"

They all set off, swift as the winds.

"Here!" cried the steward, "here!" while the groom ran to a neighboring building.

"Take care of your horses," said D'Artagnan to him.

"Fire!" replied the steward.

A gleam, like a flash of lightning, illumined the road, and, with the flash, was heard the whistling of balls, which were fired in the air.

"They fire like grooms," said Porthos; "in the time of the cardinal people fired better than that; do you remember the road to Crèvecœur, Mousqueton?"

"Ah, sir! my left side still pains me."

"Are you sure we are on the right track, lieutenant?"

"Egad, didn't you hear—these horses belong to Monsieur de Montbazon: well, Monsieur de Montbazon is the husband of Madame de Montbazon——"

"And——"

"And Madame de Montbazon is the mistress of the Duc de Beaufort."

"Ah! I understand," replied Porthos; "she has ordered relays of horses."

"Exactly so."

"And we are pursuing the duke with the very horses he has just left?"

"My dear Porthos, you are really a man of superior understanding," said D'Artagnan, with a look as if he spoke against his conviction.

"Pooh!" said Porthos, "I am what I am."

They rode on for an hour, till the horses were covered with foam and dust.

"Zounds! what is yonder?" cried D'Artagnan.

"You are very lucky, if you see anything in such a night as this," said Porthos.

"Something bright."

"I, too," cried Mousqueton, "saw them also."

"Yes, a dead horse," said D'Artagnan, pulling up his

horse, which shied: "it seems that they also are broken-winded as well as ourselves."

"I seem to hear the noise of a troop of horsemen," exclaimed Porthos, leaning over his horse's mane.

"Impossible!"

"They appear to be numerous."

"Then, 'tis something else."

"Another horse!" said Porthos.

"Dead!"

"No; dying."

"Saddled?"

"Yes, saddled and bridled."

"Then 'tis the fugitives."

"Courage, we have them!"

"But, if they are numerous," observed Mousqueton, "'tis not we who have them, but they who have us."

"Nonsense!" cried D'Artagnan, "they'll suppose us to be stronger than themselves, as we're in pursuit; they'll be afraid, and disperse."

"Certainly," remarked Porthos.

"Ah! do you see?" cried the lieutenant.

"The lights again! this time I too saw them," said Porthos.

"On! on! forward! forward!" cried D'Artagnan, in his stentorian voice, "we shall laugh over all this in five minutes."

And they darted on anew. The horses, excited by pain and emulation, raced over the dark road, in the midst of which was now seen a moving mass, more dense and obscure than the rest of the horizon.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RENCOUNTER.

THEY rode on in this way for ten minutes. Suddenly two dark forms seemed to separate from the mass, advanced, grew in size, and, as they grew larger and larger, assumed the appearance of two horsemen.

"Oh, oh!" cried D'Artagnan, "they're coming toward us."

"So much the worse for them," said Porthos.

"Who goes there?" cried a hoarse voice.

The three horsemen made no reply, stopped not, and all that was heard was the noise of swords, drawn from the scab-

bards, and of the cocking of the pistols, with which the two phantoms were armed.

"Arm to the teeth," said D'Artagnan.

Porthos understood him, and he and the lieutenant each one took from his left hand a pistol, and armed himself each in his turn.

"Who goes there?" was asked a second time. "Not a step forwarder, or you're dead men!"

"Stuff!" cried Porthos, almost choked with dust. "Stuff and nonsense! we have seen plenty of dead men in our time."

Hearing these words, the two shadows blockaded the road, and by the light of the stars might be seen the shining of their arms.

"Back!" cried D'Artagnan; "or you are dead!"

Two shots were the reply to this threat; but the assailants attacked their foes with such velocity that in a moment they were upon them; a third pistol shot was heard, aimed by D'Artagnan; and one of his adversaries fell. As to Porthos he assaulted his with such violence, that although his sword was thrust aside, the enemy was thrown off his horse, and fell about ten steps from it.

"Finish! Mouston—finish the work!" cried Porthos. And he darted on, beside his friend, who had already begun a fresh pursuit.

"Well?" said Porthos.

"I've broken his skull," cried D'Artagnan. "And you——"

"I've only thrown him down; but hark!"

Another shot of a carabine was heard. It was Mousqueton, who was obeying his master's command.

"On! on!" cried D'Artagnan; "all goes well! we have the first throw."

"Ha! ha!" answered Porthos; "behold, other players appear."

And, in fact, two other cavaliers made their appearance detached, as it seemed, from the principal group; they again disputed the road.

This time the lieutenant did not wait for the opposite party to speak.

"Stand aside," he cried; "stand off the road."

"What do you want?" asked a voice.

"The duke!" Porthos and D'Artagnan roared out both at once.

A burst of laughter was the answer, but finished with a groan. D'Artagnan had, with his sword, cut the poor wretch in two who had laughed.

At the same time Porthos and his adversary fired on each other, and D'Artagnan turned to him:

"Bravo!—you've killed him, I think."

"No, wounded his horse only."

"But what ails my horse?"

"What ails your horse is, that he's falling down," replied Porthos.

In truth, the lieutenant's horse stumbled, and fell on his knees; then a rattling in his throat was heard, and he lay down to die. D'Artagnan swore loud enough to be heard in the skies above.

"Does your honor want a horse?" asked Mousqueton.

"Zounds! want one?" cried the Gascon.

"Here's one, your honor——"

"How the devil hast thou two horses?" asked D'Artagnan, jumping on one of them.

"Their masters are dead! I thought they might be useful, so I took them."

Meantime Porthos had reloaded his pistols.

"Be on the alert!" cried D'Artagnan. "Here are two other cavaliers."

As he spoke two horsemen advanced at full speed.

"Ho! your honor," cried Mousqueton, "the man you upset is getting up."

"Why didn't thou do as thou didst to the first man?" said Porthos.

"I held the horses, my hands were full, your honor."

A shot was fired that moment—Mousqueton shrieked with pain.

"Ah, sir! I'm hit in the other side! exactly in the other! This hurt is just the fellow of that I had on the road to Amiens."

Porthos turned round like a lion—plunged on the dismounted cavalier, who tried to draw his sword; but, before it was out the scabbard, Porthos, with the hilt of his, had hit him such a terrible blow on the head that he fell like an ox beneath the butcher's knife.

Mousqueton, groaning, slipped down from his horse—his wound not allowing him to sit in his saddle.

On perceiving the cavaliers, D'Artagnan had stopped and charged his pistol afresh; besides, his horse, he found, had a carabine on the bow of the saddle.

"Here I am!" exclaimed Porthos. "Shall we wait, or shall we charge?"

"Let us charge them," answered the Gascon.

"Charge!" said Porthos.

They spurred on their horses; the other cavaliers were only twenty steps from them.

"For the king!" cried D'Artagnan.

"The king has no authority here!" answered a deep voice, which seemed to proceed from a cloud—so enveloped was the cavalier in a whirlwind of dust.

"'Tis well; we will see if the king's name is not a passport everywhere," replied the Gascon.

"See!" answered the voice.

Two shots were fired at once; one by D'Artagnan, the other by the adversary of Porthos. D'Artagnan's ball took off his enemy's hat. The ball fired by Porthos' foe went through the throat of his horse, which fell, groaning.

"Ah! this," cried the voice, the tone of which was at once piercing and jeering—"this! 'tis nothing but a butchery of horses, and not a combat between men. To the sword, sir!—the sword!"

And he jumped off his horse.

"To our swords!—be it so!" replied D'Artagnan—"that's just what I want."

D'Artagnan, in two steps, was engaged with the foe, whom, according to his custom, he attacked impetuously; but he met this time with a skill and a strength of arm which made him pause. Twice he was obliged to step back; his opponent stirred not one inch. D'Artagnan returned, and again attacked him.

Twice or thrice blows were struck on both sides without effect; sparks were emitted from the swords, like waterspouting out.

At last D'Artagnan thought it was time to try one of his favorite feints in fencing. He brought it to bear; skillfully executed it with the rapidity of lightning; and struck the blow with a force which he fancied would prove irresistible.

The blow was parried.

"Sdeath!" he cried, with his Gascon accent.

At this exclamation his adversary bounded back, and, bending his bare head, tried to distinguish in the gloom the features of the lieutenant.

As to D'Artagnan, afraid of some feint, he still stood on the defensive.

"Have a care," cried Porthos to his opponent; "I've still two pistols charged."

"The more reason you should fire the first," cried his foe.

Porthos fired; a flash threw a gleam of light over the field of battle.

As the light shone on them, a cry was heard from the other two combatants.

"Athos!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"D'Artagnan!" ejaculated Athos.

Athos raised his sword—D'Artagnan lowered his.

"Aramis!" cried Athos—"don't fire!"

"Ha! ha! is it you, Aramis?" said Porthos.

And he threw away his pistol.

Aramis pushed his back into his saddle-bags, and sheathed his sword.

"My son!" exclaimed Athos, extending his hand to D'Artagnan.

This was the name which he gave him in former days—in their moments of tender intimacy.

"Athos!" cried D'Artagnan, wringing his hands. "So you defend him! And I, who have sworn to take him dead or alive, I am dishonored—Ah!"

"Kill me!" replied Athos, uncovering his breast, "if your honor requires my death."

"Oh! woe's me! woe's me!" cried the lieutenant; "there's only one man in the world who could stay my hand; by a fatality that very man comes across my way. What shall I say to the cardinal?"

"You can tell him, sir," answered a voice, which was a voice of high command in that battlefield, "that he sent against me the only two men capable of getting the better of four men—of fighting man to man, without discomfiture against the Count de la Fère and the Chevalier D'Herblay, and of surrendering only to fifty men!"

"The prince!" exclaimed at the same moment Athos and Aramis, unmasking as they spoke; "the Duc de Beaufort!" while D'Artagnan and Porthos stepped backward.

"Fifty cavaliers!" cried the Gascon and Porthos.

"Look round you, gentlemen, if you doubt the facts," said the duke.

The two friends looked to the right—to the left; they were encompassed by a troop of horsemen.

"Hearing the noise of the fight," resumed the duke, "I fancied you had about twenty men with you, so I came back with those around me, tired of always running away, and wishing to draw my sword for my own cause; but you are only two."

"Yes, my lord; but, as you have said, two equal to twenty," said Athos.

"Come, gentlemen, your swords," said the duke.

"Our swords!" cried D'Artagnan, raising his head and regaining his self-possession—"Never!"

"Never," added Porthos.

Some of the men moved toward them.

"One moment, my lord," whispered Athos; and he said something in a low voice.

"As you will," replied the duke. "I am too much indebted to you to refuse your first request. Gentlemen," he said to his escort, "withdraw. Monsieur d'Artagnan, Monsieur de Valon, you are free."

The order was obeyed; D'Artagnan and Porthos then found themselves in the center of a large circle.

"Now, D'Herblay," said Athos, "dismount, and come here."

Aramis dismounted, and went to Porthos; while Athos approached D'Artagnan. All the four were together.

"Friends!" said Athos; "do you regret that you have not shed our blood?"

"No," replied D'Artagnan; "I regret to see that we, hitherto united, are opposed to each other. Ah! nothing will ever go well with us now!"

"Oh! heaven! No, all is over," said Porthos.

"Well—be on our side now," resumed Aramis.

"Silence, D'Herblay!" cried Athos; "such proposals are not to be made to gentlemen such as these. 'Tis a matter of conscience with them, as with us."

"Meantime, here we are, enemies," said Porthos. "Gramercy! who would ever have thought it?"

D'Artagnan only sighed.

Athos looked at them both, and took their hands in his.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "this is a serious business, and my heart bleeds as if you had pierced it through and through. Yes, we are severed; there is the great—the sad truth! but we have not as yet declared war; perhaps we shall have to make certain conditions, therefore a solemn conference is indispensable."

"For my own part, I demand it," said Aramis.

"I accept it," interposed D'Artagnan proudly.

Porthos bowed, as if in assent.

"Let us choose a place of rendezvous," continued Athos; "and, in a last interview, arrange our mutual position, and the conduct we are to maintain toward each other."

"Good!" the other three exclaimed.

"Well, then, the place?"

"Will the Place Royale suit you?" asked D'Artagnan.

"In Paris?"

"Yes."

Athos and Aramis looked at each other.

"The Place Royale—be it so!" replied Athos.

"When?"

"To-morrow evening, if you please."

"At what hour?"

"At ten in the evening if that suits you—we shall be returned."

"Good."

"There," continued Athos, "either peace or war will be decided—our honor, at all events, will be secured."

"Alas!" murmured D'Artagnan, "our honor as soldiers is lost to us forever! Now, Porthos; now we must hence, to bear back our shame on our heads to the cardinal."

"And tell him," cried a voice, "that I am not too old to be still a man of action."

D'Artagnan recognized the voice of De Rochefort.

"Can I do anything for you, gentlemen?" asked the duke.

"Be a witness that we have done what we have done."

"That shall be done, be assured. Adieu! we shall meet soon, I trust, in Paris, where you shall have your revenge."

The duke, as he spoke, kissed his hand, spurred his horse into a gallop, and disappeared, followed by his troop, who were soon lost in distance and darkness.

D'Artagnan and Porthos were now alone with a man who held their two horses; they thought it was Mousqueton, and went up to him.

"What do I see?" cried the lieutenant. "Grimaud, is it thou?"

Grimaud signified that he was not mistaken.

"And whose horses are these?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Who has given them to us?" said Porthos.

"The Comte de la Fère."

"Athos! Athos!" muttered D'Artagnan, "you think of every one; you are indeed a gentleman! Where art thou bound to, Grimaud?"

"To join the Vicomte de Bragelonne in Flanders, your honor."

They were taking the road toward Paris, when groans, which seemed to proceed from a ditch, attracted their attention.

"What is that?" asked D'Artagnan.

"It is I, Mousqueton," said a mournful voice, while a sort of shadow arose out of the side of the road.

Porthos ran to him. "Art thou dangerously wounded, my dear Mouston?" he said.

"No, sir, but I am severely wounded."

"What can we do?" said D'Artagnan; "we must return to Paris."

"I will take care of Mousqueton," said Grimaud; and he gave his arm to his old comrade, whose eyes were full of tears, and Grimaud could not tell whether the tears were caused by his wounds, or by the pleasure of seeing him again.

D'Artagnan and Porthos went on, meantime, to Paris. They were passed by a sort of courier, covered with dust, the bearer of a letter from the duke to the cardinal, giving testimony to the valor of D'Artagnan and Porthos.

Mazarin had passed a very bad night, when this letter was brought to him, announcing that the duke was free, and that he should henceforth raise up a mortal strife against him.

"What consoles me," said the cardinal, after reading the letter, "is, that at least, in this chase, D'Artagnan has done me one good turn—he has destroyed Broussel. This Gascon is a precious fellow—even his mishaps are useful."

The cardinal referred to that man whom D'Artagnan upset at the corner of the Cimetière Saint Jean, in Paris, and who was no other than the Councillor Broussel.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FOUR OLD FRIENDS PREPARE TO MEET AGAIN.

"WELL," said Porthos, seated in the courtyard of the Hotel de la Chevrette, to D'Artagnan, who with a long and melancholy face had returned from the Palais Royal, "did he receive you ungraciously, my dear friend?"

"Ifaith, yes! a hideous brute that cardinal—what are you eating there, Porthos?"

"I am dipping a biscuit into a glass of Spanish wine—do the same."

"You are right. Gimblon, a glass of wine!"

"Well! how has all gone off?"

"Zounds! you know there's only one way of saying things; so I went in and I said: 'My lord, we were not the strongest party.'

"Yes, I know that," he said, "but tell me the particulars."

"You know, Porthos, I could not give him the particulars

without naming our friends—to name them would be to commit them to ruin, so I merely said they were fifty and we were two.”

“‘There was firing, nevertheless, I heard,’ he said; ‘and your swords, they saw the light of day, I presume?’”

“‘That is, the night, my lord,’ I answered.

“‘Ah!’ cried the cardinal; ‘I thought you were a Gascon, my friend.’”

“‘I am only a Gascon,’ said I, ‘when I succeed.’ So the answer pleased, and he laughed.”

“Well, not so bad a reception as I thought,” remarked Porthos.

“No, no, but ’tis the manner in which he spoke. Gimblon, another bottle of wine—’tis almost incredible what a quantity of wine these biscuits will hold.”

“Hem—didn’t he mention me?” inquired Porthos.

“Ah! yes, indeed!” cried D’Artagnan, who was afraid of disheartening his friend by telling him that the cardinal had not breathed a word about him; “yes, surely! he said——”

“He said?” resumed Porthos.

“Stop, I want to remember his exact words. He said, as to your friend, tell him that he may sleep in peace.”

“Good, very good,” said Porthos; “that means as clear as daylight that he intends still to make me a baron.”

At this moment nine o’clock struck. D’Artagnan started.

“Ah, yes,” said Porthos; “there is nine o’clock. We have a rendezvous, you remember, at the Place Royale.”

“Ah! stop! hold your peace, Porthos—don’t remind me of it, ’tis that which has made me so cross since yesterday. I shall not go.”

“Why,” asked Porthos.

“Why, suppose this appointment is only a blind? That there’s something hidden beneath it?”

D’Artagnan did not believe Athos to be capable of a deception, but he sought an excuse for not going to the rendezvous.

“We must go,” said the superb lord of Bracieux, “lest they should say we were afraid. We, who have faced fifty foes on the highroad, can well meet two in the Place Royale.”

“Yes, yes, but they took part with the princes without apprising us of it—perhaps the duke may try to catch us in his turn.”

“Nonsense! He had us in his power, and let us go. Besides, we can be on our guard—let us take arms, and let Planchet go with us with his carabine.”

"Planchet is a Frondeur," answered D'Artagnan.

"Devil take these civil wars! one can no more reckon on one's friends than on one's footmen," said Porthos; "ah, if Mousqueton were here! there's one who will never desert me!"

"So long as you are rich! ah! my friend! 'tis not civil war that disunites us! It is that we are, each of us, twenty years older; it is that the honest emotions of youth have given place to the suggestions of interest—to the whispers of ambition—to the counsels of selfishness. Yes, you are right—let us go, Porthos! but let us go well armed—were we not to go they would say we were afraid. Hollo! Planchet, here! saddle our horses—take your carabine."

"Whom are we going to attack, sir?"

"No one—a mere matter of precaution," answered the

GUESCON.

"You know, sir, that they wished to murder that good Councillor Broussel, the father of the people?"

"Really, did they?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, but he has been avenged. He was carried home in the arms of the people. His house has been full ever since. He has received visits from the coadjutor, from Madame de Longueville, and the Prince de Conti—Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Vendome have left their names at his door."

"How did you hear this?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"From a good source, sir—I heard it from Friquet."

"From Friquet? I know that name——"

"A son of Monsieur de Broussel's servant, and a lad that I promise you, in a revolt, will not cast away his share to the dogs."

"Is he not a singing boy at Nôtre Dame?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, that's he, patronized by Bazin."

"Ah, yes, I know."

"What importance is this reptile of to you?" asked Porthos.

"Gad!" replied D'Artagnan; "he has already given me good information, and he may do the same again."

While all this was going on, Athos and Aramis were entering Paris by the Faubourg St. Antoine. They had taken some refreshment on the road, and hastened on that they might not fail at the rendezvous. Bazin was their only attendant, for Grimaud had stayed behind to take care of Mousqueton. As they were passing onward, Athos proposed that they should lay aside their arms and military costume, and assume a dress suited to the city.

"Oh, no, dear count!" cried Aramis, "is it not a warlike encounter that we are going to?"

"What do you mean, Aramis?"

"That the Place Royale is the termination to the main road to Vendomois, and nothing else."

"How, our friends?"

"Are become our most dangerous enemies, Athos; let us be on our guard."

"Oh! my dear D'Herblay!"

"Who can say whether D'Artagnan has not betrayed us to the cardinal? who can tell whether Mazarin may not take advantage of this rendezvous and seize us?"

Athos folded his arms, and his noble head fell drooping on his chest.

"What do you expect, Athos?" pursued Aramis; "such are men, and, remember, they are not always twenty years of age; let us take precautions, Athos!"

"But suppose they come unarmed? what a disgrace to us."

"Oh, never fear! besides, if they do, we can make an excuse; we come straight from a journey, and are insurgents, also."

"An excuse for us! to meet D'Artagnan with a false excuse! to have to make a false excuse to Porthos! Oh, Aramis," continued Athos, shaking his head mournfully, "upon my soul, you make me the most miserable of men; you disenchant a heart not wholly dead to friendship. Go in whatsoever guise you will, for my part I shall go disarmed."

"No, for I will not allow you to do so. 'Tis not one man, 'tis not Athos only, 'tis not the Count de la Fère, whom you will ruin by this weakness, but a whole party to whom you belong, and who depend upon you."

"Be it then so," replied Athos sorrowfully.

And they pursued their road in mournful silence.

Scarcely had they reached by the Rue de la Mule—the iron gate of the Place Royale—than they perceived three cavaliers, D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Planchet, the two former wrapped up in their military cloaks, under which their swords were hidden, and Planchet, his musket by his side. They were waiting at the entrance of the Rue St. Catherine, and their horses were fastened to the rings of the arcade. Athos, therefore, commanded Bazin to fasten up his horse and that of Aramis in the same manner.

They then advanced, two and two, and saluted each other politely.

"Now, where will it be agreeable to you that we hold our

conference?" inquired Aramis, perceiving that people were stopping to look at them, supposing that they were going to engage in one of those far-famed duels still extant in the memory of the Parisians—and especially the inhabitants of the Place Royale.

"The gate is shut," said Aramis, "but if these gentlemen like a cool retreat, under the trees, and a perfect seclusion, I will get the key from the Hotel de Rohan, and we shall be well situated.

D'Artagnan darted a look into the obscurity of the place. Porthos ventured to put his head between the railings, to try if his glance could penetrate the gloom.

"If you prefer any other place," said Athos, in his persuasive voice, "choose for yourselves."

"This place, if Monsieur d'Herblay can procure the key, is the best that we can have," was the answer.

Aramis went off at once, begging Athos not to remain alone within reach of D'Artagnan and Porthos; a piece of advice which was received with a contemptuous smile.

Aramis returned soon with a man from the Hotel de Rohan, who was saying to him:

"You swear, sir, that it is not so?"

"Stop," and Aramis gave him a louis d'or.

"Ah! you will not swear, my master," said the concierge, shaking his head.

"Well, one can never say what may happen; at present these gentlemen are our friends."

"Yes, certainly," added Athos, "and the other two——"

"You hear that?" said D'Artagnan to Porthos; "he won't swear."

"No?"

"No; caution, therefore."

Athos did not lose sight of these two speakers. Aramis opened the gate, and faced round in order that D'Artagnan and Porthos might enter. In passing through the gate, the hilt of the lieutenant's sword was caught in the grating, and he was obliged to pull off his cloak; in doing so he showed the butt-end of his pistols, and a ray of the moon was reflected on the shining metal.

"Do you see?" whispered Aramis to Athos, touching his shoulder with one hand, and pointing with the other to the arms which the Gascon wore under his belt.

"Alas, I do!" replied Athos, with a deep sigh.

He entered third, and Aramis, who shut the gate after him, last. The two serving-men waited without, but, as if they likewise mistrusted each other, kept their respective distances.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PLACE ROYALE.

THEY proceeded silently to the center of the Place; but as at this very moment the moon had just emerged from behind a cloud, it was considered that they might be observed if they remained on that spot, and they regained the shade of the lime trees.

There were benches here and there—the four gentlemen stopped near them; at a sign from Athos, Porthos and D'Artagnan sat down, the two others stood in front of them.

After a few minutes of silent embarrassment, Athos spoke.

"Gentlemen," he said, "our presence here is a proof of our former friendship; not one of us has failed at this rendezvous; not one has, therefore, to reproach himself."

"Hear me, count," replied D'Artagnan; "instead of making compliments to each other, let us explain our conduct to each other, like men of right and honest hearts."

"I wish for nothing more; have you any cause of anger against me or Monsieur D'Herblay? If so, speak out," answered Athos.

"I have," replied D'Artagnan. "When I saw you at your chateau at Bragelonne, I made certain proposals to you, which you perfectly understood; instead of answering me as a friend, you played with me as a child: the friendship, therefore, that you boast of was not broken yesterday by the shock of our swords, but by your dissimulation at your castle."

"D'Artagnan!" said Athos reproachfully.

"You asked for candor—there it is. You ask what I have against you—I say it. And I have the same sincerity to show you, if you wish, Monsieur D'Herblay; I acted in a similar way to you, and you also deceived me; I reproach you with nothing, however; 'tis only because Monsieur de la Fère has spoken of friendship that I question your conduct."

"And what do you find in it to blame?" asked Aramis haughtily.

The blood mounted instantly to the temples of D'Artagnan, who rose, and replied:

"I consider it the conduct of a pupil of Jesuits."

On seeing D'Artagnan rise, Porthos rose also; these four men were, therefore, all standing at the same time, with a menacing aspect, opposite to each other.

Upon hearing D'Artagnan's reply, Aramis seemed about to draw his sword, when Athos prevented him.

"D'Artagnan," he said, "you come here to-night, still infuriated by our yesterday's adventure. I believed that your heart was sufficiently noble to enable a friendship of twenty years to be stronger than an affront of a quarter of an hour. Come, do you really think you have anything to say against me? say it then; if I am in fault, I will avow my fault."

The grave and harmonious tones of that beloved voice had still over D'Artagnan its ancient influence, while that of Aramis, which had become sharp and screaming in his moments of ill-humor, irritated him. He answered therefore:

"I think, Monsieur le Comte, that you had something to communicate to me at your château of Bragelonne, and that gentleman"—he pointed to Aramis—"had also something to tell me, when I was in his convent. At that time I was not concerned in the adventure during which you barricaded the road that I was going; however, because I was prudent, you must not take me for a fool. If I had wished to widen the breach between those whom Monsieur D'Herblay chooses to receive with a rope-ladder, and those whom he receives with a wooden ladder, I could have spoken out."

"What are you meddling with?" cried Aramis, pale with anger, suspecting that D'Artagnan had acted as a spy on him, and had seen him with Madame de Longueville.

"I never meddle but with what concerns me, and I know how to make belief that I haven't seen what does not concern me; but I hate hypocrites, and, among that number, I place musketeers who are abbés, and abbés who are musketeers; and," he added, turning to Porthos, "here's a gentleman who is of the same opinion as myself."

Porthos, who had not spoken one word, answered merely by a word and a gesture.

He said "yes," and he put his hand on his sword. Aramis started back, and drew his. D'Artagnan bent forward, ready either to attack, or to stand on his defense.

Athos at that moment extended his hand with the air of supreme command which characterized him alone, drew out his sword and the scabbard at the same time, broke the blade in the sheath on his knee, and threw the pieces to his right. Then turning to Aramis:

"Aramis," he said, "break your sword in two."

Aramis hesitated.

"It must be done," said Athos; then in a lower and more gentle voice, he added, "I wish it."

Then Aramis, paler than before, but subdued by these

words, broke the flexible blade with his hands, and then, folding his arms, stood trembling with rage.

These proceedings made D'Artagnan and Porthos draw back. D'Artagnan did not draw his sword; Porthos put his back into the sheath.

"Never!" exclaimed Athos, raising his right hand to heaven. "Never! I swear before God, who seeth us, and who in the darkness of this night heareth us, never shall my sword cross yours, never my eye cast a glance of anger, nor my heart a throb of hatred, to you. We lived together, we loved, we hated together; we shed, we mingled our blood together, and, too probably, I may still add, that there may be yet a bond between us closer even than that of friendship—perhaps there may be the bond of crime; for we four, we once did condemn, judge, and slay a human being whom we had not any right to cut off from this world, although apparently fitter for hell than for this life. D'Artagnan, I have always loved you as my son; Porthos, we slept six years side by side; Aramis is your brother as well as mine, and Aramis has once loved you, as I love you now, and as I have ever loved you. What can Cardinal Mazarin be to us, who compelled such a man as Richelieu to act as we pleased? What is such or such a prince to us, who have fixed on the queen's head the crown? D'Artagnan, I ask your pardon for having yesterday crossed swords with you; Aramis does the same to Porthos; now, hate me if you can; but for my own part, I shall ever, even if you do hate me, retain esteem and friendship for you; repeat my words, Aramis, and then, if you desire it, and if they desire it, let us separate forever from our old friends."

There was a solemn, though momentary, silence, which was broken by Aramis.

"I swear," he said, with a calm brow, and kindly glance, but in a voice still trembling with recent emotion, "I swear that I no longer bear animosity to those who were once my friends. I regret that I ever crossed swords with you, Porthos; I swear not only that it shall never again be pointed at your breast, but that in the bottom of my heart there will never in future be the slightest hostile sentiment; now, Athos, come."

Athos was about to retire.

"Oh! no! no! do not go away!" cried D'Artagnan, impelled by one of those irresistible impulses which showed the ardor of his nature, and the native uprightness of his character: "I swear that I would shed the last drop of my blood, and the last fragment of my limbs, to preserve the friendship of such

a man as you, Athos—of such a man as you, Aramis.” And he threw himself into the arms of Athos.

“My son!” exclaimed Athos, pressing him in his arms.

“And as for me!” said Porthos, “I swear nothing, but I’m choked—forsooth! If I were obliged to fight against you, I think I should allow myself to be pierced through and through—for I never loved any one but you in the world;” and honest Porthos burst into tears, as he embraced Athos.

“My friends,” said Athos, “this is what I expected from such hearts as yours—yes—I have said it, and I now repeat it! our destinies are irrevocably united, although we pursue different roads. I respect your convictions; and while we fight for opposite sides, let us remain friends. Ministers, princes, kings will pass away like a torrent; civil war, like a flame; but we—we shall remain; I have a presentiment that we shall.”

“Yes,” replied D’Artagnan, “let us still be musketeers, and let us retain as our colors that famous napkin of the bastion Saint Gervais—on which the great cardinal had three fleurs-de-lis embroidered.”

“Be it so,” cried Aramis, “Cardinalists or Frondeurs, what matters it—let us meet again our capital seconds at a duel—our devoted friends in business—our merry companions in pleasure.”

“And whenever,” added Athos, “we meet in battle, at this word—‘Place Royale!’—let us put our swords into our left hands, and shake hands with the right—even in the very thick of the carnage.”

“You speak charmingly,” said Porthos.

“And are the first of men!” added D’Artagnan. “You excel us all!”

Athos smiled with ineffable pleasure.

“’Tis then all settled—gentlemen, your hands—are you not pretty good Christians?”

“Egad!” said D’Artagnan, “by heaven—yes.”

“We should be so on this occasion, if only to be faithful to our oath,” said Aramis.

“Ah, I’m ready to do what you will,” cried Porthos—“to swear by Mahomet—devil take me if I’ve ever been so happy as at this moment.”

And he wiped his eyes, still moist.

“Has not one of you a cross?” asked Athos.

Aramis smiled, and drew from his vest a cross of diamonds, which was hung round his neck by a cross of pearls. “Here is one,” he said.

"Well, resumed Athos, "swear on this cross, which, in spite of its material, is still a cross; swear to be united in spite of everything, and forever, and may this oath bind us to each other—and even, also, our descendants! Does this oath satisfy you?"

"Yes!" said they all with one accord.

"Ah! traitor!" muttered D'Artagnan to himself, leaning toward Aramis, and whispering in his ear, "you have made us swear on the crucifix of a Frondeuse."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FERRY OVER THE OISE.

WE hope that the reader has not quite forgotten the young traveler whom we left on the road to Flanders.

In losing sight of his guardian, whom he had quitted, gazing after him in front of the royal Basilica, Raoul spurred on his horse, in order not only to escape from his own melancholy reflections, but also to hide from Olivain the emotion which his face might betray.

One hour's rapid progress, however, sufficed to disperse the gloomy fancies which had clouded the young man's bright anticipations; and the hitherto unknown pleasure of freedom—a pleasure which has its sweetness even for those who have never suffered from dependence—seemed to gild for Raoul, not only both heaven and earth, but especially that blue, distant horizon of life which we call the future.

Nevertheless, after several attempts at conversation with Olivain, he foresaw that many long days passed thus would be very dull; and the count's agreeable voice, his gentle and persuasive eloquence, recurred to his mind, at the various towns through which they journeyed, and about which he had no longer any one to give him those interesting details which he would have drawn from Athos, the most amusing and the best informed of guides. Another recollection contributed also to sadden Raoul: on their arrival at Sonores, he had perceived, hidden between a screen of poplars, a little château, which so vividly recalled that of La Vallière to his mind, that he had halted for nearly ten minutes to gaze at it, and had resumed his journey with a sigh, too abstracted even to reply to Olivain's respectful inquiry about the cause of this fixed attention. The aspect of external objects is often a mysterious guide communicating with the fibers of memory, which, in

spite of us, will arouse them at times; this thread, like that of Ariadne, when once unraveled, will conduct one through a labyrinth of thought, in which one loses one's self in endeavoring to follow that phantom of the past which is called recollection.

Now the sight of this château had taken Raoul back fifty leagues westward, and had caused him to review his life from the moment when he had taken leave of little Louise to that in which he had seen her for the first time; and every branch of oak, every weathercock seen on a roof of slates, reminded him, that instead of returning to the friends of his childhood, every instant removed him further from them, and that perhaps he had even left them forever.

With a full heart and burning head, he desired Olivain to lead on the horses to a little inn, which he observed by the wayside within gunshot range, a little in advance of the place they had reached.

As for himself, he dismounted, and remained under a beautiful group of chestnuts in flower, among which were murmuring multitudes of bees, and bade Olivain send the host to him with writing-paper and ink, to be placed on a table which he found there, conveniently ready for writing. Olivain obeyed and continued his road, while Raoul remained sitting with his elbow leaning on the table, from time to time gently shaking the flowers from his head, which fell upon him like snow, and gazing vaguely on the pretty landscape before him, dotted over with green fields and groups of trees.

Raoul had been there about ten minutes, during five out of which he was lost in reverie, when there appeared within the circle comprised in his wandering gaze a rubicund figure, who, with a napkin round his body, another under his arm, and a white cap upon his head, approached him, holding paper, pen, and ink in his hand.

"Ah! ah!" said the apparition, "every gentleman seems to have the same fancy, for, not a quarter of an hour ago, a young lad, well-mounted like you, as tall as you, and about your age, halted before this clump of trees, and had this table and this chair brought here, and dined here—with an old gentleman who seemed to be his tutor—upon a pie, of which they haven't left a mouthful, and a bottle of Mâcon wine, of which they haven't left a drop; but fortunately we have still got some of the same wine, and some of the same pies left, and if your worship will only give your orders——"

"No, friend," replied Raoul, smiling, "I am obliged to you, but at this moment I want nothing but the things for

which I have asked;—only I shall be very glad if the ink prove black, and the pen good; upon these conditions I will pay for the pen the price of the bottle, and for the ink the price of the pie.”

“Very well, sir,” said the host, “I’ll give the pie and the bottle of wine to your servant, and in this way you will have the pen and ink into the bargain.”

“Do as you like,” said Raoul, who was beginning his apprenticeship with that particular class of society, who, when there were robbers on the high roads, were connected with them, and who, since highwaymen no longer exist, have advantageously supplied their place.

The host, his mind quite at ease about the bill, placed pen, ink, and paper upon the table. By a lucky chance the pen was tolerably good, and Raoul began to write. The host remained standing in front of him, looking with a kind of involuntary admiration at his handsome face, combining both gravity and sweetness of expression. Beauty has always been, and always will be, all powerful.

“He’s not a guest like the other one here just now,” observed mine host to Olivain, who had rejoined his master to see if he wanted anything, “and your young master has no appetite.”

“My master had appetite enough three days ago; but what can one do? he lost it the day before yesterday.”

And Olivain and the host took their way together toward the inn. Olivain, according to the custom of grooms contented with their places, relating to the tavern-keeper all that he thought he could say about the young gentleman; and Raoul wrote on thus:

“SIR: After a few hours’ march I stop to write to you, for I miss you every moment, and I am always on the point of turning my head as if to reply when you speak to me. I was so bewildered by your departure, and so overcome with grief at our separation, that I but very feebly expressed all the affection and the gratitude that I feel toward you. You will forgive me, sir, for your heart is of such a generous nature, that you can well understand all that passed in mine. I entreat you to write to me, for you form a part of my existence, and if I may venture to tell you so, I also feel anxious. It seemed to me as if you were yourself preparing for some dangerous undertaking, about which I did not dare to question you, since you had told me nothing. I have, therefore, as you see, great need to hear from you. Now that you

are no longer beside me, I am afraid every moment of erring. You sustained me powerfully, sir, and I protest to you that to-day I feel very lonely. Will you have the goodness, sir, should you receive news from Blois, to send me a few lines about my little friend, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, about whose health, when we left, some anxiety was felt? You can understand, honored and dear guardian, how precious and indispensable to me is the remembrance of the time that I have passed with you. I hope that you will sometimes, too, think of me, and if at certain hours you should miss me, if you should feel any slight regret at my absence, I shall be overwhelmed with joy at the thought that you have appreciated my affection and my devotion for yourself, and that I have been able to prove them to you while I had the happiness of living with you."

After finishing this letter, Raoul felt more composed; he looked well around him to see if Olivain and the host were not watching him, while he impressed a kiss upon the paper, a mute and touching caress, which the heart of Athos might well divine on opening the letter.

During this time Olivain had finished his bottle and eaten his pie; the horses also were refreshed. Raoul motioned the host to approach, threw a crown down on the table, mounted his horse, and posted his letter at Senlis. The rest that had been thus afforded to men and horses enabled them to continue their journey without stopping. At Verbérie, Raoul desired Olivain to make some inquiry about the young man who was preceding them; he had been observed to pass only three-quarters of an hour previously, but he was well-mounted, as the tavern-keeper had already said, and rode at a rapid pace.

"Let us try to overtake this gentleman," said Raoul to Olivain; "like ourselves, he is on his way to join the army, and may prove agreeable company."

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when Raoul arrived at Compiègne; there he dined heartily, and again inquired about the young gentleman who was in advance of them. He had stopped, like Raoul, at the hotel of the Bell and Bottle, the best at Compiègne, and had started again on his journey, saying that he should sleep at Noyon.

"Well, let us sleep at Noyon," said Raoul.

"Sir," replied Olivain respectfully, "allow me to remark that we have already much fatigued the horses this morning.

I think it would be well to sleep here, and to start again very early to-morrow. Eighteen leagues is enough for the first stage."

"The Count de la Fère wished me to hasten on," replied Raoul, "that I might rejoin the prince on the morning of the fourth day; let us push on, then, to Noyon, it will be a stage similar to those that we traveled from Blois to Paris. We shall arrive at eight o'clock. The horses will have a long night's rest, and at five o'clock to-morrow morning we can be again on the road."

Olivain dared offer no opposition to this determination; but he followed his master grumbling.

"Go on, go on," said he, between his teeth, "expend your ardor the first day; to-morrow, instead of journeying twenty miles, you will do ten; the day after to-morrow, five, and in three days you will be in bed. There you must rest; all these young people are such braggarts."

It is easy to see that Olivain had not been taught in the school of the Planchets and the Grimauds. Raoul really felt tired; but he was desirous of testing his strength, and, brought up in the principles of Athos, and certain of having heard him speak a thousand times of stages of twenty-five leagues, he did not wish to fall short of his model. D'Artagnan, that man of iron, who seemed to be made of nerve and muscle only, had struck him with admiration. Therefore, in spite of all Olivain's remarks, he continued to urge on his steed more and more, and following a pleasant little path, leading to a ferry, and which he had been assured shortened the journey by the distance of one league, he arrived at the summit of a hill, and perceived the river flowing before him. A little troop of men on horseback were waiting on the edge of the stream, ready to embark. Raoul did not doubt that this was the gentleman and his escort: he called out to him, but he was too distant to be heard; then, in spite of the weariness of his beast, he made it gallop; but the rising ground soon deprived him of the sight of the travelers, and when he had again attained a new height, the ferryboat had left the shore and was making for the opposite bank. Raoul seeing that he could not arrive in time to cross the ferry with the travelers, halted to wait for Olivain. At this moment a shriek was heard which seemed to come from the river. Raoul turned toward the side whence the cry had sounded, and shaded his eyes from the glare of the setting sun with his hand.

"Olivain!" he exclaimed, "what do I see below there?"

A second scream, more piercing than the first, now sounded.

"Oh, sir!" cried Olivain, "the rope which holds the ferry-boat has broken, and the boat is drifting away. But what do I see in the water? something struggling."

"Oh! yes," exclaimed Raoul, fixing his glance on one point in the stream, splendidly illumined by the setting sun, "a horse, a rider!"

"They are sinking!" cried Olivain in his turn.

It was true, and Raoul was convinced that some accident had happened, and that a man was drowning; he gave his horse its head, struck his spurs into its sides, and the animal, urged on by pain, and feeling that he had space open before him, bounded over a kind of paling which inclosed the landing place, and fell into the river, scattering to a distance waves of white froth.

"Ah, sir!" cried Olivain, "what are you doing? Good God!"

Raoul was directing his horse toward the unhappy man in danger. This was, in fact, a custom familiar to him. Having been brought up on the banks of the Loire, he might have been said to have been cradled on its waves; a hundred times he had crossed it on horseback, a thousand times he had swum across. Athos, foreseeing the period when he should make a soldier of the viscount, had inured him to all these kinds of undertakings.

"Oh, heavens!" continued Olivain, in despair, "what would the count say if he only saw you?"

"The count would do as I do," replied Raoul, urging his horse vigorously forward.

"But I—but I," cried Olivain, pale and disconsolate, rushing about on the shore, "how shall I cross?"

"Leap, coward," cried Raoul, swimming on; then addressing the traveler, who was struggling twenty yards in advance of him, "Courage, sir," said he, "courage, we are coming to your aid."

Olivain advanced, retired, then made his horse rear—turned it, and then, struck to the core by shame, leaped, as Raoul had done, only repeating:

"I am a dead man; we are lost!"

In the meantime the ferryboat floated away, carried down by the stream; and the shrieks of those whom it contained resounded more and more. A man with gray hair had thrown himself from the boat into the river, and was swimming vigorously toward the person who was drowning; but being obliged to go against the current, he advanced but slowly. Raoul continued his way, and was visibly gaining the shore;

but the horse and its rider, of whom he did not lose sight, were evidently sinking. The nostrils of the horse were no longer above water, and the rider, who had lost the reins in struggling, fell with his head back and his arms extended. One moment longer, and all had disappeared.

"Courage," cried Raoul, "courage."

"Too late!" murmured the young man, "too late!"

The water passed over his head, and stifled his voice in his mouth.

Raoul sprang from his horse, to which he had left the charge of its own preservation, and in three or four strokes was at the gentleman's side; he seized the horse at once by the curb, and raised its head above water. The animal then breathed more freely, and as if he comprehended that they had come to his aid, redoubled his efforts. Raoul at the same time seized one of the young man's hands, and placed it on the mane, at which it grasped with the tenacity of a drowning man. Thus, sure that the rider would not release his hold, Raoul now only directed his attention to the horse, which he guided to the opposite bank, helping it to cut through the water, and encouraging it with words.

All at once the horse stumbled against a ridge, and then placed its foot on the sand.

"Saved!" exclaimed the man with gray hair, who sprang on land in his turn.

"Saved!" mechanically repeated the young gentleman, releasing the mane, and gliding from the saddle into Raoul's arms; Raoul was but ten yards from the shore: he bore the fainting man there, and laying him down on the grass, unfastened the buttons of his collar, and unhooked his doublet. A moment later the gray-headed man was beside him. Olivain managed in his turn to land, after crossing himself repeatedly, and the people in the ferryboat guided themselves as well as they were able toward the bank, with the aid of a hook which chanced to be in the boat.

Thanks to the attention of Raoul, and the man who accompanied the young gentleman, the color gradually returned to the pale cheeks of the dying man, who opened two eyes at first bewildered, but who soon fixed his glance upon the person who had saved him.

"Ah, sir," he exclaimed, "it was you I wanted; without you I was a dead man—thrice dead."

"But one recovers, sir, as you see," replied Raoul, "and we shall but have had a bath."

"Oh! sir, what gratitude I feel," exclaimed the man with gray hair.

"Ah, there you are, my good D'Arminges, I have given you a great fright, have I not? but it is your own fault; you were my tutor, why did you not teach me to swim better?"

"Oh, sir!" replied the old man, "had any misfortune happened to you, I should never have dared to have shown myself to the marshal again."

"But how did the accident happen?" asked Raoul.

"Oh, sir, in the most natural manner possible," replied he to whom they had given the title of count. "We were about a third of the way across the river when the cord of the ferryboat broke. Alarmed by the cries and the gestures of the boatmen, my horse sprang into the water. I swim badly, and dared not throw myself into the river. Instead of aiding the movements of my horse, I paralyzed them; and I was just going to drown myself, with the best grace in the world, when you arrived just in time to pull me out of the water; therefore, sir, if you will agree, henceforth we are friends in life until death."

"Sir," replied Raoul, bowing, "I am entirely at your service, I assure you."

"I am called the Count de Guiche," continued the young man; "my father is the Maréchal de Grammont; and now that you know who I am, do me the honor to inform me who you are."

"I am the Viscount de Bragelonne," answered Raoul, blushing at being unable to name his father, as the Count de Guiche had done.

"Viscount, your countenance, your goodness, and your courage incline me toward you; my gratitude is already due to you—shake hands—I ask your friendship."

"Sir," said Raoul, returning the count's pressure of the hand, "I like you already from my heart; pray regard me as a devoted friend, I beseech you."

"And now, where are you going, viscount?" inquired De Guiche.

"To the army, under the prince, count."

"And I too," exclaimed the young man, in a transport of joy. "Oh, so much the better; we shall fire off the first pistol-shot together."

"It is well—be friends," said the tutor; "young as you both are, you were perhaps born under the same star, and were destined to meet. "And now," continued he, "you must change your clothes; your servants, to whom I gave directions the moment they had left the ferryboat, ought to be already at the inn. Linen and wine are both being warmed—come."

The young men had no objection to make to this proposition; on the contrary, they thought it an excellent one. They mounted again at once, while looks of admiration passed between them. They were indeed two elegant horsemen, with figures slight and upright—two noble faces, with open foreheads—bright and proud looks—loyal and intelligent smiles.

De Guiche might have been about eighteen years of age; but he was scarcely taller than Raoul, who was only fifteen.

CHAPTER XXX.

SKIRMISHING.

THE halt at Noyon was short, every one there being wrapped in profound sleep. Raoul had desired to be awakened should Grimaud have arrived—but Grimaud did not arrive. Doubtless, too, the horses, on their parts, appreciated the eight hours of repose, and the abundant stabling which was granted to them. The Count de Guiche was awakened at five o'clock in the morning by Raoul, who came to wish him good-day. They had breakfast in haste, and at six o'clock had already gone ten miles.

The young count's conversation was most interesting to Raoul; therefore he listened much, while the count talked much. Brought up in Paris, where Raoul had been but once; at the court, which Raoul had never seen—his follies as page—two duels, which he had already found the means of fighting, in spite of the edicts against them, and more especially in spite of his tutor's vigilance—these things excited the greatest curiosity in Raoul. Raoul had only been at M. Scarron's house; he named to De Guiche the people whom he had seen there. De Guiche knew everybody: Madame de Muillan, Mademoiselle D'Aubigné, Mademoiselle de Scudery, Mademoiselle Paulet, Madame de Chevreuse. He criticised everybody humorously. Raoul trembled lest he should laugh among the rest at Madame de Chevreuse, for whom he entertained deep and genuine sympathy, but either instinctively, or from affection for the Duchesse de Chevreuse, he said everything possible in her favor. His praises increased Raoul's friendship for him twofold. Then came the question of gallantry and love affairs. Under this head also, Bragelonne had much more to hear than to tell. He listened attentively, and fancied that he discovered through three or four rather

frivolous adventures, that the count, like himself, had a secret to hide in the depths of his heart.

De Guiche, as we have said before, had been educated at the court, and the intrigues of this court were known to him. It was the same court of which Raoul had so often heard the Count de la Fère speak, except that its aspects had much changed since the period when Athos had himself witnessed it; therefore everything which the Count de Guiche related was new to his traveling companion. The young count, witty and caustic, passed all the world in review; the queen herself was not spared, and Cardinal Mazarin came in for his share of ridicule.

The day passed away as rapidly as one hour. The count's tutor, a man of the world, and a *bon vivant*, up to his eyes in learning, as his pupil described him, often recalled the profound erudition, the witty and caustic satire, of Athos to Raoul; but as regarded grace, delicacy, and nobility of external appearance, no one in these points was to be compared to the Count de la Fère.

The horses, which were better cared for than on the previous day, stopped at Arras at four o'clock in the evening. They were approaching the scene of war; and as bands of Spaniards sometimes took advantage of the night to make expeditions even as far as the neighborhood of Arras, they determined to remain in this town until the morrow. The French army held all between Pont-à-Mare as far as Valenciennes, falling back upon Douai. The prince was said to be in person at Béthune.

The enemy's army extended from Cassel to Courtray; and as there was no species of violence or pillage which it did not commit, the poor people on the frontier quitted their isolated dwellings, and fled for refuge into the strong cities which held out a shelter to them. Arras was encumbered with fugitives. An approaching battle was much spoken of, the prince having maneuvered until that moment, only in order to await a reinforcement, which had just reached him.

The young men congratulated themselves on having arrived so opportunely. The evening was employed in discussing the war; the grooms polished the arms; the young men loaded the pistols in case of a skirmish, and they awoke in despair, having both dreamed that they had arrived too late to participate in the battle. In the morning it was rumored that Prince Condé had evacuated Béthune, and fallen back upon Carvin, leaving, however, a strong garrison in the former city.

But as there was nothing positively certain in his report, the young men decided to continue their way toward Béthune, free, on the road, to diverge to the right, and to march to Carvin if necessary.

The count's tutor was well acquainted with the country; he consequently proposed to take a cross road, which lay between that of Lens and that of Béthune. They obtained information at Ablain, and a statement of their route was left for Grimaud. About seven o'clock in the morning they set out. De Guiche, who was young and impulsive, said to Raoul, "Here we are, three masters and three servants. Our valets are well armed, and yours seems to be tough enough."

"I have never seen him put to the test," replied Raoul, "but he is a Breton, which promises something."

"Yes, yes," resumed De Guiche; "I am sure he can fire a musket when required. On my side, I have two very sure men, who have been in action with my father. We, therefore, represent six fighting men: if we should meet a little troop of enemies, equal or even superior in number to our own, shall we charge them, Raoul?"

"Certainly, sir," replied the viscount.

"Holloa! young people—stop there!" said the tutor, joining in the conversation. "Zounds! how do you arrange my instructions, pray, count? You seem to forget the orders I received to conduct you safe and sound to his highness the prince! Once with the army, you may be killed at your good pleasure; but, until that time, I warn you, that in my capacity of general of the army, I shall order a retreat, and turn my back on the first red coat I see."

De Guiche and Raoul glanced at each other, smiling.

They arrived at Ablain without accident. There they inquired, and learned that the prince had in reality quitted Béthune, and placed himself between Cambria and La Ven-thie. Therefore, leaving directions at every place for Grimaud, they took a cross road, which conducted the little troop upon the bank of a small stream flowing into the Lys. The country was beautiful, intersected by valleys as green as the emerald. Every here and there they passed little copses crossing the path which they were following. In anticipation of some ambuscade in each of these little woods, the tutor placed his two servants at the head of the band, thus forming the advance guard. Himself and the two young men represented the body of the army, while Olivain, with his rifle on his knee, and his eye on the watch, protected the rear.

They had observed for some time before them on the

horizon a rather thick wood; and when they had arrived at a distance of a hundred steps from it, Monsieur d'Arminges took his usual precautions, and sent on in advance the count's two grooms. The servants had just disappeared under the trees, followed by the tutor, and the young men were laughing and talking about a hundred yards off. Olivain was at the same distance in the rear, when suddenly there resounded five or six musket-shots. The tutor cried halt; the young men obeyed, pulling up their steeds, and at the same moment the two valets were seen returning at a gallop.

The young men, impatient to learn the cause of the firing, spurred on toward the servants. The tutor followed them behind.

"Were you stopped?" eagerly inquired the two youths.

"No," replied the servants, "it is even probable that we have not been seen; the shots were fired about a hundred steps in advance of us, almost in the thickest part of the wood, and we returned to ask your advice."

"My advice," said Monsieur d'Arminges, "and, if needs be, my will is, that we beat a retreat. There may be an ambuscade concealed in this wood."

"Did you see nothing there?" asked the count.

"I thought I saw," said one of the servants, "horsemen dressed in yellow, creeping along the bed of the stream."

"That's it," said the tutor. "We have fallen in with a party of Spaniards. Come back, sirs—back."

The two youths looked at each other, and at this moment a pistol-shot and several cries for help were heard. Another glance between the young men convinced them both that neither had any wish to go back, and as the tutor had already turned his horse's head, they both spurred on forward, Raoul crying, "Follow me, Olivain;" and Count de Guiche, "Follow, Urban and Blanchet." And before the tutor could recover his surprise, they had both disappeared into the forest. When they spurred their steeds, they held their pistols ready also. Five minutes after they arrived at the spot whence the noise had proceeded; therefore, restraining their horses, they advanced cautiously.

"Hush," whispered De Guiche: "these are cavaliers."

"Yes, three on horseback, and three who have dismounted."

"Can you see what they are doing?"

"Yes, they appear to be searching a wounded or dead man."

"It is some cowardly assassination," said De Guiche.

"They are soldiers, though," resumed De Bragelonne.

"Yes, skirmishers; that is to say, highway robbers."

"At them!" cried Raoul. "At them!" echoed De Guiche.

"Oh! sirs, sirs; in the name of heaven!" cried the poor tutor.

But he was not listened to, and his cries only served to arouse the attention of the Spaniards.

The men on horseback at once rushed at the two youths, leaving the three others to complete the plunder of the two travelers; for, on approaching nearer, instead of one extended figure, the young men discovered two. De Guiche fired the first shot at ten paces, and missed his man; and the Spaniard, who had advanced to meet Raoul, aimed in his turn, and Raoul felt a pain in his left arm, similar to that of a blow from a whip. He let off his fire at but four paces. Struck in the breast, and extending his arms, the Spaniard fell back on the croup of his horse, which, turning round, carried him off.

Raoul, at this moment, perceived the muzzle of a gun pointed at him, and remembering the recommendation of Athos, he, with the rapidity of lightning, made his horse rear as the shot was fired. His horse bounded to one side, losing its footing, and fell, entangling Raoul's leg under its body. The Spaniard sprang forward, and seized the gun by its muzzle, in order to strike Raoul on the head by the butt-end. In the position in which Raoul lay, unfortunately, he could neither draw his sword from the scabbard, nor his pistols from their holsters. The butt-end of the musket hovered over his head, and he could scarcely restrain himself from closing his eyes, when, with one bound, De Guiche reached the Spaniard, and placed a pistol at his throat. "Yield!" he cried, "or you are a dead man." The musket fell from the soldier's hands, who yielded at the instant.

De Guiche summoned one of his grooms, and delivering the prisoner into his charge, with orders to shoot him through the head if he attempted to escape, he leaped from his horse and approached Raoul.

"Faith, sir," said Raoul, smiling, although his pallor somewhat betrayed the excitement consequent on a first affair—"you are in a great hurry to pay your debts, and have not been long under any obligation to me. Without your aid," continued he, repeating the count's words, "I should have been a dead man—thrice dead."

"My antagonist took flight," replied De Guiche, "and left me at liberty to come to your aid. But you are seriously wounded? I see you are covered with blood!"

"I believe," said Raoul, "that I have got something like a scratch on the arm. If you will help me to drag myself from under my horse, I hope nothing need prevent us continuing our journey."

Monsieur d'Arminges and Olivain had already dismounted, and were attempting to raise the horse, which struggled in terror. At last Raoul succeeded in drawing his foot from the stirrup, and his leg from under the animal, and in a second he was on his feet again.

"Nothing broken?" asked De Guiche.

"Faith, no, thank heaven!" replied Raoul; "but what has become of the poor wretches whom these scoundrels were murdering?"

"I fear we arrived too late. They had killed them and taken flight, carrying off their booty. My two servants are examining the bodies."

"Let us go and see whether they are quite dead, or if they can be recovered," suggested Raoul. "Olivain, we have come into possession of two horses, but I have lost my own; take the best of the two for yourself, and give me yours."

Saying this, they approached the spot where the victims lay.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MONK.

Two men lay extended on the ground; one bathed in his blood, and motionless, with his face toward the earth; he was dead. The other leaned against the tree, supported there by the two valets, and was praying fervently, with clasped hands, his eyes raised to heaven. He had received a ball in his thigh, which had broken the upper part of it. The young men first approached the dead man.

"He is a priest," said Bragelonne, "he has worn the tonsure. Oh, the scoundrels! to lift their hands against the minister of God."

"Come here, sir," said Urban, an old soldier who had served under the cardinal-duke in all his campaigns. "Come here, there is nothing to be done with him; while we may perhaps be able to save this one."

The wounded man smiled sadly. "Save me! oh no," said he; "but help me to die, you can."

"Are you a priest?" asked Raoul.

"No, sir."

"I ask, as your unfortunate companion appeared to me to belong to the church."

"He is the curate of Béthune, sir, and was carrying the holy vessels belonging to his church, and the treasure of the chapter, to a safe place, the prince having abandoned our town yesterday; and as it was known that bands of the enemy were prowling about the country, no one dared to accompany the good man, so I offered to do so."

"And, sir," continued the wounded man, "I suffer much, and would like, if possible, to be carried to some house."

"Where you can be relieved?" asked De Guiche.

"No, where I can confess myself."

"But perhaps you are not so dangerously wounded as you think," said Raoul.

"Sir," replied the wounded man, "believe me there is no time to lose; the ball has broken my thigh bone, and entered the intestines."

"Are you a surgeon?" asked De Guiche.

"No, but I know a little about wounds, and mine is mortal. Try, therefore, either to carry me to some place where I may see a priest, or take the trouble to send one to me here. It is my soul that must be saved; as for my body, that is lost.

"Good God! good God!" added the wounded man, in an accent of terror which made the young man shudder; "you will not allow me to die without receiving absolution? that would be too terrible!"

"Calm yourself, sir," replied De Guiche. "I swear to you that you shall receive the consolation that you ask. Only tell us where we shall find a house at which we can demand aid, and a village from which we can fetch a priest."

"Thank you, and God will reward you! About half a mile from this, on the same road, there is an inn; and about a mile further on, after leaving the inn, you will reach the village of Greney. There you must find the curate, or if he is not at home, go to the convent of the Augustins, which is the last house on the right in the village, and bring me one of the brothers. Monk or priest, it matters not, provided he have received from our holy church the power of absolving *in articulo mortis*."

"Monsieur d'Arminges," said De Guiche, "remain beside this unfortunate man, and see that he is removed as gently as possible. The vicomte and myself will go and find a priest."

"Go, sir," replied the tutor; "but, in heaven's name, do not expose yourself to danger!"

"Do not fear. Besides, we are safe to-day; you know the axiom—*Nom bis in idem*."

"Courage, sir," said Raoul to the wounded man. "We are going to execute your wishes."

"May heaven prosper you!" replied the dying man, with an accent of gratitude impossible to describe.

The two young men galloped off in the direction mentioned to them, and ten minutes after reached the inn. Raoul, without dismounting, called to the host, and announced that a wounded man was about to be brought to his house, and begged him in the meantime to prepare everything necessary for dressing his wounds. He desired him also, should he know in the neighborhood any doctor, surgeon, or operator, to fetch him, taking on himself the payment of the messenger. Raoul had already proceeded for more than a mile, and had begun to descry the first houses of the village, the red tiled roofs of which stood out strongly from the green trees which surrounded them, when, coming toward them, mounted on a mule, they perceived a poor monk, whose large hat and gray worsted dress made them mistake him for an Augustine brother. Chance for once had seemed to favor them in sending what they were seeking for. He was a man about twenty-two or twenty-three years old, but who appeared to be aged by his ascetic exercises. His complexion was pale, not of that deadly pallor which is a beauty, but of a bilious, yellow hue; his light colorless hair was short, and scarcely extended beyond the circle formed by the hat round his head, and his light blue eyes seemed entirely destitute of any expression.

"Sir," began Raoul, with his usual politeness, "are you an ecclesiastic?"

"Why do you ask me that?" replied the stranger, with a coolness which was barely civil.

"Because we want to know," said De Guiche haughtily.

The stranger touched his mule with his heel, and continued his way.

In a second De Guiche had sprung before him and barred his passage. "Answer, sir," exclaimed he; "you have been asked politely, and every question is worth an answer."

"I suppose I am free to say who I am, or not, to any kind of people who choose to take a fancy to ask me?"

It was with difficulty that De Guiche restrained the intense desire he had of breaking the monk's bones.

"In the first place," he said, making an effort to control himself, "we are not people who may be treated anyhow;

my friend there is the Viscount of Bragelonne, and I am the Count de Guiche. Nor is it from a matter of caprice that we asked you the question; for there is a wounded and dying man who demands the succor of the church. If you be a priest, I conjure you in the name of humanity to follow me to aid this man; if you be not, it is a different matter, and I warn you, in the name of courtesy, of which you appear so utterly ignorant, that I shall chastise you for your insolence."

The pale face of the monk became so livid, and his smile was so strange, that Raoul, whose eyes were still fixed upon him, felt as if this smile had struck to his heart like some insult.

"He is some Spanish or Flemish spy," said he, putting his hand to his pistols. A glance, threatening and as transient as lightning, replied to Raoul.

"Well, sir," said De Guiche, "are you going to reply?"

"I am a priest," said the young man.

"Then, father," said Raoul, forcing himself to give a respect to his speech which did not come from his heart, "if you are a priest, then you have an opportunity, as my friend has told you, of exercising your vocation. At the next inn you will find a wounded man, who has asked the assistance of a minister of God, attended on by our servants."

"I will go," said the monk.

And he touched his mule.

"If you do not go, sir," said De Guiche, "remember that we have two steeds quite able to catch your mule, and the power of having you seized wherever you may be; and then I swear your trial will be short; one can always find a tree and a cord."

The monk's eye again flashed, but that was all; he merely repeated his phrase, "I will go," and he went.

"Let us follow him," said De Guiche; "it will be the more sure plan."

"I was about to propose doing so," answered De Bragelonne.

In the space of five minutes the monk turned round to ascertain whether he was followed or not.

"You see," said Raoul, "we have done wisely."

"What a horrible face that monk has," said De Guiche.

"Horrible!" replied Raoul, "especially in expression."

"Yes, yes," said De Guiche, "a strange face; but these monks are subject to such degrading practices; the fasts

make them pale; the blows of the discipline make them hypocrites; and their eyes become inflamed in weeping for the good things of this life which we enjoy, and which they have lost."

"Well," said Raoul, "the poor man will get his priest; but by heaven, the penitent appears to have a better conscience than the confessor. I confess I am accustomed to see priests of a very different appearance."

"Ah!" exclaimed De Guiche, "you must understand that this is one of those wandering brothers, who go begging on the highroad, until some day a benefice falls down from heaven for them; they are mostly foreigners—Scotch, Irish, or Danish."

"What a misfortune for that poor wounded fellow to die under the hands of such a friar."

"Pshaw!" said De Guiche. "Absolution comes not from him who administers it, but from God. However, let me tell you that I would rather die unshriven than have anything to say to such a confessor. You are of my opinion, are you not, viscount? and I see you playing with the pommel of your pistol, as if you had a great inclination to break his head."

"Yes, count, it is a strange thing, and one which might astonish you; but I feel an indescribable horror at the sight of that man. Have you ever seen a snake rise up in your path?"

"Never," answered De Guiche.

"Well, it has happened to me to do so in our Blaisois forests, and I remember that the first time I encountered one with its eyes fixed upon me, curled up, swinging its head, and pointing its tongue, that I remained fixed, pale, and as if fascinated, until the moment when the Count de la Fère——"

"Your father?" asked De Guiche.

"No, my guardian," replied Raoul, blushing.

"Very well——"

"Until the moment when the Count de la Fère," resumed Raoul, "said, 'Come, Bragelonne, draw your sword;' then only I rushed upon the reptile, and cut it in two; just at the moment when it was rising on its tail and hissing ere it sprang upon me. Well, I vow I felt exactly the same sensation at the sight of that man when he said, 'Why do you ask me that?' and looked at me."

"Then you regret that you did not cut your serpent in two morsels?"

"Faith, yes, almost," said Raoul.

They had now arrived in sight of the little inn, and could see on the opposite side the procession bearing the wounded man, and guided by Monsieur d'Arminges. The youths spurred on.

"There is the wounded man," said De Guiche, passing close to the Augustine brother. "Be good enough to hurry yourself a little, sir monk."

As for Raoul, he avoided the monk the whole width of the road, and passed him, turning his head away in disgust.

The young men rode up to the wounded man to announce that they were followed by the priest. He raised himself to glance in the direction which they pointed out, saw the monk, and fell back upon the litter, his face being lightened up by joy.

"And now," said the youths, "we have done all we can for you; and as we are in haste to join the prince's army we must continue our journey. You will excuse us, sir, but we are told that a battle is expected, and we do not wish to arrive the day after it."

"Go, my young sirs," said the sick man; "and may you both be blessed for your piety. God protect you and all dear to you!"

"Sir," said De Guiche to his tutor, "we will precede you, and you can rejoin us on the road to Cambrin."

The host was at his door, and everything was prepared—bed, bandages and lint.

"Everything," said he to Raoul, "shall be done as you desire; but will you not stop to have your wound dressed?"

"Oh, my wound—mine—it is nothing," replied the viscount; "it will be time to think about it when we next halt; only have the goodness, should you see a cavalier pass who should make inquiries from you about a young man mounted on a chestnut horse, and followed by a servant, to tell him, in fact, that you have seen me, but that I have continued my journey, and intend to dine at Mazingarbe, and to stop at Cambrin. This cavalier is my attendant."

"Would it not be safer and more sure that I should ask him his name, and tell him yours?" demanded the host.

"There is no harm in over-precaution. I am the Viscount de Bragelonne, and he is called Grimaud."

At this moment the wounded man passed on one side, and the monk on the other, the latter dismounting from his mule and desiring that it should be taken to the stables without being unharnessed.

"Come, count," said Raoul, who seemed instinctively to dislike the vicinity of the Augustine; "come, I feel ill here," and the two young men spurred on.

The litter, borne by the two servants, now entered the house. The host and his wife were standing on the steps of the staircase, while the unhappy man seemed to suffer dreadful pain, and yet only to be anxious to know if he was followed by the monk. At the sight of this pale, bleeding man, the wife grasped her husband's arm.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked the latter; "are you going to be ill just now?"

"No, but look," replied the hostess, pointing to the wounded man; "I ask you if you recognize him?"

"That man—wait a bit."

"Ah! I see that you know him," exclaimed the wife; "for you have become pale in your turn."

"In truth," cried the host, "misfortune has come upon our house; it is the executioner of Béthune!"

"The former executioner of Béthune!" murmured the young monk, shrinking back, and showing on his countenance the feeling of repugnance which his penitent inspired.

Monsieur d'Arminges, who was at the door, perceived his hesitation.

"Sir monk," said he, "whether he is now or has been an executioner, this unfortunate being is no less a man. Render to him, then, the last service he will ask from you, and your work will be all the more meritorious."

The monk made no reply, but silently wended his way to the room where the two valets had deposited the dying man on a bed. D'Arminges and Olivain, and the two grooms, then mounted their horses, and all four started off at a quick trot to rejoin Raoul and his companion. Just as the tutor and his escort disappeared in their turn, a new traveler stopped on the threshold of the inn.

"What does your worship want?" demanded the host, pale and trembling from the discovery he had just made.

The traveler made a sign as if he wished to drink, pointed to his horse, and gesticulated like a man who is rubbing something.

"Ah! diable," said the host to himself, "this man seems dumb. And where will your worship drink?"

"There," answered the traveler, pointing to a table.

"I was mistaken," said the host; "he's not quite dumb. And what else does your worship wish for?"

"To know if you have seen a young man pass, fifteen

years of age, mounted on a chestnut horse, and followed by a groom."

"The Viscount de Bragelonne?"

"Just so."

"Then you are called Monsieur Grimaud?"

The traveler made a sign of assent.

"Well, then," said the host, "your young master has been here a quarter of an hour ago; he will dine at Mazingarbe, and sleep at Cambrin."

"How far from Mazingarbe?"

"Two miles and a half."

"Thank you."

Grimaud was drinking his wine silently, and had just placed his glass on the table to be filled a second time, when a fearful scream resounded from the room occupied by the monk and the dying man. Grimaud sprang up.

"What is that?" said he; "whence that cry?"

"From the wounded man's room," replied the host.

"What wounded man?"

"The former executioner of Béthune, who has just been brought in here assassinated by the Spaniards, and who is now being confessed by an Augustine friar."

"The old executioner of Béthune?" muttered Grimaud; "a man between fifty-five and sixty, tall, strong, swarthy, black hair and beard."

"That is he—do you know him?" asked the host.

"I have seen him once," replied Grimaud, a cloud darkening his countenance at the picture called up by his recollections.

At this instant a second cry, less piercing than the first, but followed by prolonged groaning, was heard.

"We must see what it is," said Grimaud.

If Grimaud was slow in speaking, we know that he was quick in action; he sprang to the door and shook it violently, but it was bolted on the other side.

"Open the door," cried the host, "open it instantly, sir monk!"

No reply.

"Unfasten it, or I will break in the panel," said Grimaud.

The same silence, and then, ere the host could oppose his design, Grimaud seized on some pincers which he perceived lying in a corner, and had forced the bolt. The room was inundated with blood, streaming through the mattresses upon which lay the wounded man speechless—the monk had disappeared.

"The monk!" cried the host; "where is the monk?"

Grimaud sprang toward an open window which looked into the courtyard.

"He has escaped by this means," exclaimed he.

"Do you think so?" said the host, bewildered; "boy, see if the mule belonging to the monk is still in the stable."

"There's no mule," replied the person to whom this question was addressed.

The host held up his hand, and looked around him suspiciously, while Grimaud knit his brows and approached the wounded man, whose worn, hard features awoke in his mind such awful recollections of the past.

"There can be no longer any doubt but that it is himself," said he.

"Does he still live," inquired the innkeeper.

Making no reply, Grimaud opened the poor man's jacket to feel if the heart beat, while the host approached in his turn; but in a moment they both fell back, the host uttering a cry of horror, and Grimaud becoming pallid. The blade of a dagger was buried up to the hilt in the left side of the executioner.

"Run—run for help!" cried Grimaud, "and I will remain beside him here."

The host quitted the room in agitation: and as for his wife, she had fled at the sound of her husband's cries.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GRIMAUD SPEAKS.

GRIMAUD was left alone with the executioner, who in a few moments opened his eyes.

"Help, help," he murmured; "oh, God! have I not a single friend in the world who will aid me either to live or to die?"

"Take courage," said Grimaud; "they are gone to find help."

"Who are you?" asked the wounded man, fixing his half-opened eyes on Grimaud.

"An old acquaintance," replied Grimaud.

"You?" and the wounded man sought to recall the features of the person who was before him to his mind.

"Under what circumstances did we meet?" he asked again.

"One night, twenty years ago, my master fetched you from Béthune, and conducted you to Armentières."

"I know you well, now," said the executioner; "you are one of the four grooms."

"Just so."

"Where do you come from now?"

"I was passing by on the road, and drew up at this inn to rest my horse. They were relating to me how the executioner of Béthune was here, and wounded, when you uttered two piercing cries. At the first we ran to the door, and at the second forced it open."

"And the monk?" exclaimed the executioner; "did you see the monk?"

"What monk?"

"The monk that was shut in with me."

"No, he was no longer here; he appears to have fled by that window. Was it he who struck you?"

"Yes," said the executioner.

Grimaud moved, as if to leave the room.

"What are you going to do?" asked the wounded man.

"He must be apprehended."

"Do not attempt it; he has revenged himself, and has done well. Now I may hope that God will forgive me, since my crime has been expiated."

"Explain yourself," said Grimaud.

"The woman, whom you and your masters made me kill——"

"Milady?"

"Yes, milady; it is true you called her thus."

"Well, what has the monk to do with milady?"

"She was his mother."

Grimaud trembled, and stared at the dying man in a dull and stupid manner.

"His mother!" repeated he.

"Yes, his mother."

"But does he know this secret, then?"

"I mistook him for a monk, and revealed it to him in confession."

"Unhappy man," cried Grimaud, whose face was covered with sweat, at the bare idea of the evil results which such a revelation might cause—"unhappy man, you named no one, I hope?"

"I pronounced no name, for I knew none, except his mother's, as a young girl, and it was by this name that he recognized her; but he knows that his uncle was among her judges."

Thus speaking, he fell back exhausted. Grimaud, wishing to relieve him, advanced his hand toward the hilt of the dagger.

"Touch me not!" said the executioner; "if this dagger is withdrawn, I shall die."

Grimaud remained with his hand extended; then, striking his forehead, he exclaimed: "Oh! if this man should ever discover the names of the others, my master is lost."

"Haste! haste to him, and warn him," cried the wounded man, "if he still lives; warn his friends too. My death, believe me, will not be the end of this terrible adventure."

"Where was the monk going?" asked Grimaud.

"Toward Paris."

"Who stopped him?"

"Two young gentlemen, who were on their way to join the army, and the name of one of whom I heard his companion mention, the Viscount de Bragelonne."

"And it was this young man who brought the monk to you. Then it was the will of God that it should be so, and this it is which is so awful," continued Grimaud; "and yet that woman deserved her fate: do you not think so?"

"On one's deathbed the crimes of others appear very small in comparison with one's own," said the executioner; and he fell back exhausted, and closed his eyes.

At this moment the host re-entered the room, followed not only by a surgeon, but by many other persons, whom curiosity had attracted to the spot. The surgeon approached the dying man, who seemed to have fainted.

"We must first extract the steel from the side," said he, shaking his head in a significant manner.

The prophecy which the wounded man had just uttered recurred to Grimaud, who turned away his head. The weapon, as we have already stated, was plunged into the body up to the hilt, and as the surgeon, taking it by the end, drew it from the wound, the wounded man opened his eyes, and fixed them in a manner truly frightful. When, at last, the blade had been entirely withdrawn, a red froth issued from the mouth of the wounded man, and a stream of blood sprang from the wound, when he at length drew breath; then fixing his eyes on Grimaud, with a singular expression, the dying man uttered the last death rattle, and expired.

Then, Grimaud, raising the dagger from the pool of blood which was gliding along the room—to the horror of all present—made a sign to the host to follow him, paid him with a generosity worthy of his master, and again mounted his horse.

Grimaud's first intentions had been to return to Paris, but he remembered the anxiety which his prolonged absence might occasion to Raoul, and, reflecting that there were now only two miles between Raoul and himself, that a quarter of an hour's riding would unite them, and that the going, returning, and explanation would not occupy an hour, he put spurs to his horse, and, ten minutes after, had reached the only inn of Mazingarbe.

Raoul was seated at table with the Count de Guiche and his tutor, when all at once the door opened, and Grimaud presented himself, travel-stained and dirty, still covered with the blood of the unfortunate executioner.

"Grimaud, my good Grimaud!" exclaimed Raoul, "here you are at last! Excuse me, sirs, this is not a servant, but a friend. How did you leave the count?" continued he; "does he regret me a little? Have you seen him since I left him? Answer, for I have many things to tell you, too; indeed, the last three days some odd adventures have happened—but, what is the matter?—how pale you are!—and blood, too! what is this?"

"It is the blood of the unfortunate man whom you left at the inn, and who died in my arms."

"In your arms?—that man! But know you who he was?"

"I know that he was the old headsman of Béthune."

"You knew him? and he is dead?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir," said D'Arminges, "it is the common lot, and even an executioner is not exempted from it. I had a bad opinion of him the moment I saw his wound, and, since he asked for a monk, you know it was his own opinion too that death must ensue."

At the mention of the monk Grimaud turned pale.

"Come, come," continued D'Arminges, "to dinner;" for, like most men of his age and of his generation, he did not allow any sensibility to interfere with a repast.

"You are right, sir," said Raoul. "Come, Grimaud, order some dinner for yourself, and when you have rested a little, we can talk."

"No, sir, no," said Grimaud; "I cannot stop a moment; I must start for Paris again immediately."

"How now? you start for Paris? Explain yourself! do you intend to disobey me for a change?"

"I cannot explain myself, and must disobey, unless you wish me to leave his honor, the count, to be killed!"

"Grimaud, my friend," said the viscount, "will you leave me thus, in such anxiety? Speak, speak in heaven's name!"

"I can tell you but one thing, sir, for the secret you wish to know is not my own. You met this monk, did you not?"

"Yes."

"You conducted him to the wounded man, and you had time to observe him, and perhaps you would know him again were you to meet him?"

"Yes! yes!" exclaimed both the young men.

"Very well! if ever you meet him again, wherever it may be, whether on the highroad or in the street, or in a church, anywhere that he or you may be, put your foot on his neck and crush him without pity, without mercy, as you would crush a viper, a snake, an asp; destroy him, and leave him not till he is dead; the lives of five men are not safe, in my opinion, as long as he lives!"

And without adding another word, Grimaud, profiting by the astonishment and terror into which he had thrown his auditors, rushed from the room. Ten minutes later the gallop of a horse was heard on the road—it was Grimaud on his way to Paris. When once in the saddle, Grimaud reflected upon two things: the first that, at the pace he was going, his horse would not carry him ten miles; and secondly, that he had no money. But Grimaud's imagination was more prolific than his speech; and, therefore, at the first halt he sold his steed, and with the money obtained from the purchaser he took post-horses.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DINNER IN THE OLD STYLE.

THE second interview between the former musketeers had not been so pompous and stiff as the first. Athos, with his superior understanding, wisely deemed that the table would be the most speedy and complete point of reunion, and at the moment when his friends, doubtful of his deportment and his sobriety, dared scarcely speak of some of their former good dinners, he was the first to propose that they should all assemble round some well-spread table, and abandon themselves unreservedly to their own natural character and manners, a freedom which had formerly contributed so much to the good understanding between them as to give them the name of the inseparables. For different reasons this was an agreeable proposition to them all, and it was therefore agreed that each should leave a very exact address,

and that upon the request of any of the associates, a meeting should be convoked at a famous eating-house in the Rue de la Monnaie, of the sign of the Hermitage; the first rendezvous was fixed for the following Wednesday, at eight o'clock in the evening precisely.

On that day, in fact, the four friends arrived punctually at the said hour, each from his own abode. Porthos had been trying a new horse; D'Artagnan came from being on guard at the Louvre; Aramis had been to visit one of his penitents in the neighborhood; and Athos, whose domicile was established in the Rue Guénegaud, found himself close at hand. They were therefore somewhat surprised to meet altogether at the door of the Hermitage; Athos starting out from the Pont Neuf, Porthos by the Rue du Roule, D'Artagnan by the Rue des Fossées St. Germain l'Auxerrois, and Aramis by the Rue de Bethisy.

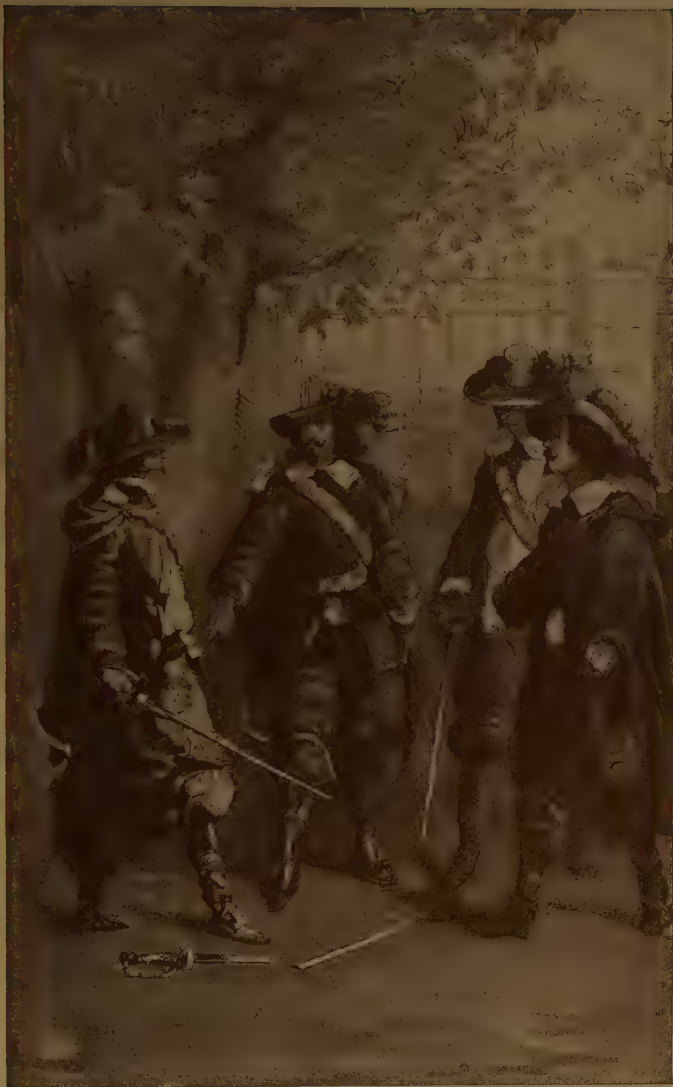
The first words exchanged between the four friends, on account of the ceremony which each of them mingled with their demonstration, were somewhat forced, and even the repast began with a kind of stiffness. Athos perceived this embarrassment, and by way of supplying a prompt remedy, called for four bottles of champagne.

At this order, given in Athos' habitually calm manner, the face of the Gascon relaxed, and Porthos brow was smooth. Aramis was astonished. He knew that Athos not only never drank, but that more, he had a kind of repugnance to wine. This astonishment was doubled when Aramis saw Athos fill a bumper, and drink with his former enthusiasm. His companions following his example, in an instant the four bottles were empty, and this excellent specific succeeded in dissipating even the slightest cloud which might have rested on their spirits. Now the four friends began to speak loud, scarcely waiting till one had finished for another to begin, and to assume each his favorite attitude on or at the table. Soon—strange fact—Aramis unfastened two buttons of his doublet, seeing which, Porthos unhooked his entirely.

Battles, long journeys, blows given and received, sufficed for the first subject of conversation; which then turned upon the silent struggles sustained against him who was now called the great cardinal.

"Faith," said Aramis, laughing, "we have praised the dead enough, let us revile the living a little. I should like to say something evil of Mazarin; is it allowed?"

"Go on—go on," replied D'Artagnan, laughing heartily, "relate your story, and I will applaud if it is a good one."



"Aramis," he said, "break your sword in two."

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"A great prince," said Aramis, "with whom Mazarin sought an alliance, was invited by him to send him a list of the conditions on which he would do him the honor to negotiate with him. The prince, who had a great repugnance to treat with such an ill-bred fellow, made his list against the grain, and sent it. In this list there were three conditions which displeased Mazarin, and he offered the prince ten thousand crowns to renounce them."

"Ah, ah, ah!" exclaimed the three friends, "not a bad bargain; and there was no fear of being taken at his word; what did the prince then?"

"The prince immediately sent fifty thousand francs to Mazarin begging him never to write to him again, and offered twenty thousand francs more, on condition that he would never speak to him."

"What did Mazarin do?"

"He stormed?" suggested Athos.

"He beat the messenger?" cried Porthos.

"He accepted the money?" said D'Artagnan.

"You have guessed it," answered Aramis; and they all laughed so heartily that the host appeared in order to inquire whether these gentlemen wanted anything; he thought they were fighting.

At last their hilarity was calmed, and—

"Faith!" exclaimed D'Artagnan to his two friends, "you may well wish ill to Mazarin; for I assure you, on his side, he wishes you no good."

"Pooh! really?" asked Athos. "If I thought that the fellow knew me by my name, I would be rebaptized, for fear I should be thought to know him."

"He knows you better by your actions than by your name; he is quite aware that there are two gentlemen who have greatly aided the escape of Monsieur de Beaufort, and he has instigated an active search for them, I can answer for it."

"By whom?"

"By me; and this morning he sent for me to ask me if I had obtained any information."

"And what did you reply?"

"That I had none yet; but that I was to dine to-day with two gentlemen, who would be able to give me some."

"You told him that?" said Porthos, his broad smile spreading over his honest face, "bravo! and you are not afraid of that, Athos?"

"No," replied Athos; "it is not the search of Mazarin that I fear."

"Now," said Aramis, "tell me a little what you do fear."

"Nothing for the present at least, in good earnest."

"And with regard to the past?" asked Porthos.

"Oh! the past is another thing," said Athos, sighing; "the past and the future."

"Are you afraid for your young Raoul?" asked Aramis.

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "one is never killed in a first engagement."

"Nor in the second," said Aramis.

"Nor in the third," returned Porthos; "and even when one is killed, one rises again, the proof of which is, that here we are!"

"No," said Athos, "it is not Raoul about whom I am anxious, for I trust he will conduct himself like a gentleman; and if he is killed—well—he will die bravely; but hold—should such a misfortune happen—well—" Athos passed his hand across his pale brow.

"Well?" asked Aramis.

"Well, I shall look upon it as an expiation."

"Oh! ah!" said D'Artagnan; "I know what you mean."

"And I, too," added Aramis; "but you must not think of that, Athos; what is past is past."

"I don't understand," said Porthos.

"The affair at Armentières," whispered D'Artagnan.

"The affair at Armentières?" asked he again.

"Milady."

"Oh, yes!" said Porthos; "true, I had forgotten it."

Athos looked at him intently.

"You have forgotten it, Porthos?" said he.

"Faith! yes, it is so long ago," answered Porthos.

"This thing does not, then, weigh on your conscience?"

"Faith, no."

"And you, D'Artagnan?"

"I—I own that when my mind returns to that terrible period, I have no recollection of anything but the stiffened corpse of that poor Madame Bonacieux. Yes, yes, murmured he, "I have often felt regret for the victim, but never any remorse for the assassin."

Athos shook his head doubtfully.

"Consider," said Aramis, "if you admit divine justice and its participation in the things of this world, that woman was punished by the will of heaven. We were but the instruments—that is all."

"But as to free will, Aramis?"

"How acts the judge? He has a free will, and he con-

demns fearlessly. What does the executioner? He is master of his arm, and yet he strikes without remorse."

"The executioner!" muttered Athos, as if arrested by some recollection.

"I know that it is terrible," said D'Artagnan; "but when I reflect that we have killed English, Rochellais, Spaniards, nay, even French, who never did us any other harm but to aim at and to miss us, whose only fault was to cross swords with us, and not to be able to ward us off quick enough—I can, on my honor, find an excuse for my share of the murder of that woman."

"As for me," said Porthos, "now that you have reminded me of it, Athos, I have the scene again before me, as if I was there! Milady was there, as it were in your place." (Athos changed color.) "I—I was where D'Artagnan stands. I wore a short sword which cut like a Damascus—you remember it Aramis, for you——"

"And you, Aramis?"

"Well, I think of it sometimes," said Aramis. "And I swear to you all three, that had the executioner of Béthune—was he not of Béthune?—yes, egad! of Béthune!—not been there I would have cut off the head of that infamous being without remembering who I am, and even remembering it. She was a bad woman."

"And then," resumed Aramis, with the tone of philosophical indifference which he had assumed since he had belonged to the church, and in which there was more atheism than confidence in God, "what is the use of thinking of all that? At the last hour we must confess this action, and God knows better than we can whether it is a crime, a fault, or a meritorious action. I repent of it? Egad! no. By honor, and by the holy cross, I only regret it because she was a woman."

"The most satisfactory part of the matter," said D'Artagnan, "is that there remains no trace of it."

"She had a son," observed Athos.

"Oh! yes; I know that," said D'Artagnan, "and you mentioned it to me; but who knows what has become of him? If the serpent be dead, why not its brood? Do you think that his uncle De Winter would have brought up that young viper? De Winter probably condemned the son as he had done the mother."

"Then," said Athos, "woe to De Winter, for the child had done no harm."

"May the devil take me if the child be not dead," said

Porthos. "There is so much fog in that detestable country, at least so D'Artagnan declares."

Just as this conclusion arrived at by Porthos was about probably to bring back hilarity to the faces now more or less clouded, footsteps were heard on the stair, and some one knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried Athos.

"Please your honors," said the host, "a person, in a great hurry, wishes to speak to one of you."

"To which of us?" asked all the four friends.

"To him who is called the Count de la Fère."

"It is I," said Athos; "and what is the name of the person?"

"Grimaud."

"Ah!" exclaimed Athos, turning pale. "Returned already. What has happened, then, to Bragelonne?"

"Let him enter," cried D'Artagnan, "let him come up."

But Grimaud had already mounted the staircase, and was waiting on the last step; so springing into the room he motioned the host to leave it. The door being closed, the four friends waited in expectation. Grimaud's agitation, his pallor, the sweat which covered his face, the dust which soiled his clothes, all indicated that he was the messenger of some important and terrible news.

"Your honors," said he, "that woman had a child; that child has become a man; the tigress had a little one, the tiger has roused himself; he is ready to spring upon you—beware!"

Athos glanced around at his friends with a melancholy smile. Porthos turned to look at his sword which was hung up against the wall; Aramis seized his knife; D'Artagnan rose.

"What do you mean, Grimaud?" he exclaimed.

"That milady's son has left England; that he is in France on his road to Paris, if he be not here already."

"The devil he is!" said Porthos. "Are you sure of it?"

"Certain!" replied Grimaud.

This announcement was received in silence. Grimaud was so breathless, so exhausted, that he had fallen back upon a chair. Athos filled a glass with champagne, and gave it to him.

"Well, and after all," said D'Artagnan, "supposing that he lives, that he comes to Paris, we have seen many other such. Let him come."

"Yes," echoed Porthos, stroking his sword, suspended to the wall, "we can wait for him, let him come."

"Moreover, he is but a child," said Aramis.

Grimaud rose.

"A child!" he exclaimed. "Do you know what he has done—this child? Disguised as a monk, he discovered the whole history in confession from the executioner of Béthune, and having confessed him, after having learned everything from him, he gave him absolution by planting this dagger into his heart. See, it is still red and wet, for it is not thirty hours ago since it was drawn from the wound."

And Grimaud threw the dagger on the table.

D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis rose, and in one spontaneous motion rushed to their swords. Athos alone remained seated, calm and thoughtful.

"And you say he is dressed as a monk, Grimaud?"

"Yes, as an Augustine monk."

"What sized man is he?"

"About my height, the host said; thin, pale, with light blue eyes, and light hair."

"And he did not see Raoul?" asked Athos.

"Yes, on the contrary, they met, and it was the viscount himself who conducted him to the bed of the dying man."

Athos rose, in his turn, without speaking—went, and unhooked his sword.

"Heigh, sir," said D'Artagnan, trying to laugh; "do you know we look very much like silly women! How is it that we, four men, who have faced armies without blinking, begin to tremble at the sight of a child?"

"Yes," said Athos, "but this child comes in the name of heaven."

And they hastily quitted the inn.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LETTER FROM CHARLES THE FIRST.

THE reader must now cross the Seine with us, and follow us to the door of the Carmelite Convent in the Rue St. Jacques. It is eleven o'clock in the morning, and the pious sisters have just finished saying a mass for the success of the armies of King Charles I. Leaving the church, a woman and a young girl dressed in black, the one as a widow and the other as an orphan, have re-entered their cell.

The woman kneels on a prie-Dieu of painted wood, and at a short distance from her stands the young girl, leaning against a chair, weeping.

The woman must have been handsome, but the traces of sorrow have aged her. The young girl is lovely, and her tears only embellish her; the lady appears to be about forty years of age, the girl about fourteen.

"Oh, God!" prayed the kneeling suppliant, "protect my husband, guard my son, and take my wretched life instead!"

"Oh, God," murmured the girl, "leave me my mother!"

"Your mother can be of no use to you in this world, Henrietta," said the lady, turning round. "Your mother has no longer either throne or husband, nor son, nor money, nor friends—the whole world, my poor child, has abandoned your mother!" And she fell back, weeping, into her daughter's arms.

"Courage, take courage, my dear mother!" said the girl.

"Ah! 'tis an unfortunate year for kings," said the mother.

"And no one thinks of us in this country, for each must think of his own affairs. As long as your brother was with me he kept me up; but he is gone, and can no longer send us news of himself, either to me or to your father. I have pawned my last jewels, sold all your clothes and my own to pay his servants, who refused to accompany him unless I made this sacrifice. We are now reduced to live at the expense of these daughters of heaven; we are the poor succored by God."

"But why not address yourself to your sister the queen?" asked the girl.

"Alas! the queen, my sister, is no longer queen, my child. Another reigns in her name. One day you will be able to understand how this is."

"Well, then, to the king, your nephew; shall I speak to him? You know how much he loves me, my mother."

"Alas! my nephew is not yet king, and you know Laporte has told us twenty times that he himself is in need of almost everything."

"Then let us pray to heaven," said the girl.

The two women who thus knelt together in prayer were the daughter and granddaughter of Henry IV., the wife and daughter of Charles I.

They had just finished their double prayer, when a nun softly tapped at the door of the cell.

"Enter, my sister," said the queen.

"I trust your majesty will pardon this intrusion on her meditations, but a foreign lord has arrived from England, and waits in the parlor, demanding the honor of presenting a letter to your majesty."

"Oh! a letter! a letter from the king, perhaps. News from your father, do you hear, Henrietta—And the name of this lord?"

"Lord de Winter."

"Lord de Winter!" exclaimed the queen, "the friend of my husband. Oh, let him come in!"

And the queen advanced to meet the messenger, whose hand she seized affectionately, while he knelt down, and presented a letter to her contained in a gold case.

"Ah! my lord," said the queen, "you bring us three things which we have not seen for a long time. Gold, a devoted friend, and a letter from the king, our husband and master."

De Winter bowed again, unable to reply from excess of emotion.

On their side the mother and daughter retired into the embrasure of a window to read eagerly the following letter:

"DEAR WIFE: We have now reached the moment of decision. I have concentrated here at Naseby camp all the resources which heaven has left me; and I write to you in haste from thence. Here I await the army of my rebellious subjects, and I am about to fight for the last time against them. If victorious, I shall continue the struggle; if beaten, I am completely lost. I shall try, in the latter case (alas! in our position, one must provide for everything), I shall try to gain the coast of France. But can they, will they receive an unhappy king, who will bring such a sad story into a country already agitated by civil discord? Your wisdom and your affection must serve me as guides. The bearer of this letter will tell you, madame, what I dare not trust to the risk of mis-carrying. He will explain to you the steps which I expect you to pursue. I charge him also with my blessing for my children, and with the sentiments of my heart for yourself, dear wife."

The letter bore the signature, not of "Charles, King," but of "Charles—still king."

"And let him be no longer king," cried the queen. "Let him be conquered, exiled, proscribed, provided he still lives. Alas! in these days the throne is too dangerous a place for me to wish him to keep it! But, my lord, tell me," she continued, "hide nothing from me—what is, in truth, the king's position? Is it as hopeless as he thinks?"

"Alas! madame—more hopeless than he thinks. His majesty has so good a heart, that he cannot understand

hatred—is so loyal, that he does not suspect treason! England is disturbed by a spirit of excitement, which, I greatly fear, blood alone can extinguish.”

“But, Lord Montrose,” replied the queen, “I have heard of his great and rapid successes, of battles gained. I heard it said that he was marching to the frontier to join the king.”

“Yes, madame; but on the frontier he was met by Lesly, he had tired victory by means of superhuman undertakings. Now victory has abandoned him. Montrose, beaten at Philiphaugh, was obliged to disperse the remains of his army, and to fly disguised as a servant. He is at Bergen, in Norway.”

“Heaven preserve him!” said the queen. “It is at least a consolation to know that some who have so often risked their lives for us are in safety. And now, my lord, that I see how hopeless the position of the king is, tell me with what you are charged on the part of my royal husband.”

“Well, then, madame,” said De Winter, “the king wishes you to try and discover the dispositions of the king and queen toward him.”

“Alas! you know, the king is but still a child, and the queen is a woman weak enough too. Monsieur Mazarin is everything here.”

“Does he desire to play the part in France that Cromwell plays in England?”

“Oh, no! He is a subtle and cunning Italian, who, though he may dream of crime, dares never commit it; and unlike Cromwell, who disposes of both Houses, Mazarin has had the queen to support him in his struggle with the parliament.”

“More reason, then, that he should protect a king pursued by his parliament.”

The queen shook her head despairingly.

“If I judge for myself, my lord,” she said, “the cardinal will do nothing, and will even, perhaps, act against us. The presence of my daughter and myself in France is already irksome to him; much more so would be that of the king. My lord,” added Henrietta, with a melancholy smile, “it is sad, and almost shameful, to be obliged to say that we have passed the winter in the Louvre without money, without linen—almost without bread, and often not rising from bed because we wanted fire.”

“Horrible!” cried De Winter; “the daughter of Henry IV., and the wife of King Charles! Wherefore did you not apply then, madame, to the first person you saw from us?”

“Such is the hospitality shown to a queen by the minister, from whom a king would demand it.”

"But I heard that a marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mademoiselle d'Orléans was spoken of," said De Winter.

"Yes, for an instant I hoped it was so. The young people felt a mutual esteem; but the queen, who at first sanctioned their affection, changed her mind, and Monsieur the Duc d'Orléans, who had encouraged the familiarity between them, has forbidden his daughter to think any longer about the union. Oh, my lord!" continued the queen, without restraining her tears, "it is better to fight as the king has done, and to die, as perhaps he will, than to live begging as I have."

"Courage, madame! courage! Do not despair! The interests of the French crown--endangered this moment—are to discourage civil rebellion in a nation so near to it. Mazarin, as a statesman, will understand the necessity of doing so."

"But are you sure," said the queen doubtfully, "that you have not been forestalled?"

"By whom?"

"By the Joyces, the Prinns, the Cromwells."

"By a tailor, by a coachmaker, by a brewer! Ah! I hope, madame, that the cardinal will not enter into negotiations with such men!"

"Ah! what wishes he himself?" asked Madame Henrietta.

"Solely the honor of the king—of the queen."

"Well, let us hope that he will do something for the sake of their honor," said the queen. "A true friend's eloquence is so powerful, my lord, that you have reassured me. Give me your hand, and let us go to the minister; and yet," she added, "suppose he refuse, and that the king loses the battle!"

"His majesty will then take refuge in Holland, where I hear that his highness the Prince of Wales is.

"And can his majesty count upon many such subjects as yourself for his fight?"

"Alas! no, madame," answered De Winter; "but the case is provided for, and I am come to France to seek allies."

"Allies!" said the queen, shaking her head.

"Madame!" replied De Winter, "provided I can find some old friends of former times, I will answer for anything."

"Come, then, my lord," said the queen, with the painful doubt that is felt by those who have suffered much; "come, and may heaven hear you."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CROMWELL'S LETTER.

AT THE very moment when the queen quitted the convent to go to the Palais Royale, a young man dismounted at the gate of this royal abode, and announced to the guards that he had something of consequence to communicate to Cardinal Mazarin. Although the cardinal was often tormented by fear, he was more often in need of counsel and information, and he was therefore sufficiently accessible. The true difficulty of being admitted was not to be found at the first door, and even the second was passed easily enough; but at the third watched, beside the guard and the doorkeepers, the faithful Bernouin, a Cerberus whom no speech could soften; no wand, even of gold, could charm.

It was, therefore, at the third door, that those who solicited or were bid to an audience, underwent a formal interrogatory.

The young man, having left his horse tied to the gate in the court, mounted the great staircase, and addressed the guard in the first chamber.

"Cardinal Mazarin?" said he.

"Pass on," replied the guard.

The cavalier entered the second hall, which was guarded by the musketeers and doorkeepers.

"Have you a letter of audience?" asked a porter, advancing to the new arrival.

"I have one! but not from Cardinal Mazarin."

"Enter, and ask for Monsieur Bernouin," said the porter, opening the door of the third room. Whether he but held his usual post, or whether it might be by accident, but Monsieur Bernouin was found standing behind the door, and must have heard all that had passed.

"You seek me, sir?" said he. "From whom may the letter be that you bear to his eminence?"

"From the General Oliver Cromwell," said the newcomer. "Be so good as to mention this name to his eminence, and to bring me word whether he will receive me—yes or no."

Saying which, he resumed the dark and proud bearing peculiar at that time to the Puritans. Bernouin cast an inquisitorial glance at the person of the young man, and entered the cabinet of the cardinal, to whom he transmitted the messenger's words.

"A man bringing a letter from Oliver Cromwell?" said Mazarin. "And what kind of a man."

"A true Englishman, your eminence. Hair sandy-red—more red than sandy; gray-blue eyes—more gray than blue; and for the rest, stiff and proud."

"Let him give in his letter."

"His eminence asks for the letter," said Bernouin, passing back into the antechamber.

"His eminence cannot see the letter without the bearer of it," replied the young man; "but to convince you that I am really the bearer of a letter, see, here it is; and add," continued he, "that I am not a simple messenger, but an envoy extraordinary."

Bernouin re-entered the cabinet, and returning in a few seconds, "Enter, sir," said he.

The young man appeared on the threshold of the minister's closet; in one hand holding his hat, in the other the letter. Mazarin rose. "Have you, sir," asked he, "a letter accrediting you to me?"

"There it is, my lord," said the young man.

Mazarin took the letter, and read it thus:

"Mr. Mordaunt, one of my secretaries, will remit this letter of introduction to his eminence, the Cardinal Mazarin, in Paris. He is also the bearer of a second confidential epistle for his eminence.

OLIVER CROMWELL."

"Very well, Monsieur Mordaunt," said Mazarin, "give me the second letter, and sit down."

The young man drew from his pocket the second letter, presented it to the cardinal, and sat down. The cardinal, however, did not unseal the letter at once, but continued to turn it again and again in his hand; then, in accordance with his usual custom, and judging from experience that few people could hide anything from him, when he began to question them, fixing his eyes upon them at the same time, he thus addressed the messenger:

"You are very young, Monsieur Mordaunt, for this difficult task of ambassador, in which the oldest diplomatists sometimes fail."

"My lord, I am twenty-three years of age; but your eminence is mistaken in saying that I am young. I am older than your eminence, although I possess not your wisdom. Years of suffering, in my opinion, count double, and I have suffered for twenty years."

"Ah, yes, I understand," said Mazarin; "want of fortune, perhaps. You are poor—are you not?" Then he added to himself—"These English revolutionists are all beggars and ill-bred."

"My lord, I ought to have a fortune of three hundred a year, but it has been taken from me."

"You are not then a man of the people?" said Mazarin, astonished.

"If I bore my title I should be a lord. If I bore my name, you would have heard one of the most illustrious names of England."

"What is your name, then?" asked Mazarin.

"My name is Mordaunt," replied the young man, bowing.

Mazarin now understood that Cromwell's envoy desired to retain his incognito. He was silent for an instant, and during that time he scanned the young man even more attentively than he had done at first. The messenger was unmoved.

"Devil take these Puritans," said Mazarin aside; "they are cut out of marble." Then he added aloud: "But you have relations left to you?"

"I have one remaining, and three times I have presented myself to him to ask his support, and three times he has desired his servants to turn me away."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* my dear Mr. Mordaunt," said Mazarin, hoping, by a display of affected pity to catch the young man in a snare, "how extremely your history interests me! You know not, then, anything of your birth, you have never seen your mother?"

"Yes, my lord; she came three times, while I was a child, to my nurse's house; I remember the last time she came as well as if it were to-day."

"You have a good memory," said Mazarin.

"Oh! yes, my lord!" said the young man, with such peculiar emphasis that the cardinal felt a shudder run through all his veins.

"And who brought you up?" he asked again.

"A French nurse, who sent me away when I was five years old, because no one paid her for me, telling me the name of a relation, of whom she had heard my mother often speak."

"What became of you?"

"As I was weeping and begging on the highroad, a minister from Kingston took me in, instructed me in the Calvinistic faith, taught me all he knew himself, and aided me in my researches after my family."

"And these researches?"

"Were fruitless; chance did everything."

"You discovered what had become of your mother?"

"I learned that she had been assassinated by my relation, aided by four friends, but I was already aware that I had been robbed of all my wealth, and degraded from my nobility, by King Charles I."

"Oh! I now understand why you are in the service of Cromwell; you hate the king."

"Yes, my lord, I hate him!" said the young man.

Mazarin marked, with surprise, the diabolical expression with which the young man uttered these words; as, in general, ordinary countenances are colored by the blood—his face seemed dyed by hatred, and became livid.

"Your history is a terrible one, Mr. Mordaunt, and touches me keenly; but, happily for you, you serve an all-powerful master, he ought to aid you in your search; we have so many means of gaining information."

"My lord, to a dog of good breed it is only necessary to show but one end of a track, that he may be certain to reach the other end."

"But this relation whom you mentioned, do you wish me to speak to him?" said Mazarin, who was anxious to make a friend about Cromwell's person.

"Thanks, my lord, I will speak to him myself; he will treat me better the next time I see him."

"You have the means, then, of touching him?"

"I have the means of making myself feared."

Mazarin looked at the young man, but, at the fire which shot from his glance, he bent down his head; then, embarrassed how to continue such a conversation, he opened Cromwell's letter. It was lengthy, and began by alluding to the situation of England, and announcing that he was on the eve of a decisive engagement with King Charles, and certain of success. He then adverted to the hospitality and protection afforded by France to Henrietta Maria, and continued:

"As regards King Charles, the question must be viewed differently; in receiving and aiding him France will censure the acts of the English nation, and thus so essentially do harm to England, and especially to the progress of the government which she reckons upon forming, so that such a proceeding will be equal to flagrant hostilities."

At this moment Mazarin became very uneasy at the turn which the letter was taking, and paused to glance under his eyes at the young man. The latter continued lost in thought.

Mazarin resumed his reading of the general's worthy epistle, which ended by demanding perfect neutrality from France:

"A neutrality," it said, "which was solely to consist in excluding King Charles from the French territories, nor to aid a king so entirely a stranger, either by arms, money or troops. Farewell, sir; should we not receive a reply in the space of fifteen days, I shall presume my letter will have miscarried."

OLIVER CROMWELL."

"Mr. Mordaunt," said the cardinal, raising his voice, as if to arouse the thinker, "my reply to this letter will be more satisfactory to General Cromwell if I am convinced that all are ignorant of my having given one; go, therefore, and await it at Boulogne-sur-Mer, and promise me to set out tomorrow morning."

"I promise, my lord," replied Mordaunt; "but how many days will your eminence oblige me to await your reply?"

"If you do not receive it in ten days, you can leave."

Mordaunt bowed.

"It is not all, sir," continued Mazarin; "your private adventures have touched me to the quick; besides, the letter from Mr. Cromwell makes you an important person in my eyes as ambassador; come, tell me what can I do for you?"

Mordaunt reflected a moment, and, after some hesitation, was about to speak, when Bernouin entered hastily, and, bending down to the ear of the cardinal, whispered to him:

"My lord, the Queen Henrietta Maria, accompanied by an English noble, is just entering the Palais Royal at this moment."

Mazarin made a bound from his chair, which did not escape the attention of the young man, and repressed the confidence he was about to make.

"Sir," said the cardinal, "you have heard me? I fix on Boulogne because I presume that every town in France is indifferent to you; if you prefer another, name it; but you can easily conceive that, surrounded as I am by influences from which I can escape alone by means of discretion, I desire your presence in Paris to be ignored."

"I shall go, sir," said Mordaunt, advancing a few steps to the door by which he had entered.

"No, not that way I beg, sir," quickly exclaimed the cardinal; "be so good as to pass by that gallery, by which you can gain the hall; I do not wish you to be seen leaving—our interview must be kept secret."

Mordaunt followed Bernouin, who conducted him through

a neighboring chamber, and left him with a doorkeeper showing him the way out.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HENRIETTA MARIA AND MAZARIN.

THE cardinal rose, and advanced in haste to receive the queen of England. He showed the more respect to this queen, deprived of all pomp, and without followers, as he felt some self-reproach for his own want of heart and his avarice. But suppliants for favor know how to vary the expression of their features, and the daughter of Henry IV. smiled as she advanced to meet one whom she hated and despised.

"Ah!" said Mazarin to himself, "what a sweet face! does she come to borrow money of me?"

And he threw an uneasy glance at his strong box; he even turned inside the bevel of the magnificent diamond ring, the brilliancy of which drew every eye upon his hand, which indeed was handsome and white.

"Your eminence," said the august visitor, "it was my first intention to speak of the affairs which have brought me here, to the queen, my sister, but I have reflected that political matters are more especially the concerns of men."

"Madame," said Mazarin, "be assured that your majesty overwhelms me with this flattering distinction."

"He is very gracious," thought the queen; "has he guessed my errand, then?"

"Give," continued the cardinal, "your commands to the most respectful of your servants."

"Alas, sir," replied the queen, "I have lost the habit of giving commands, and have adopted instead that of making petitions; I am come to petition you, too happy should my prayer be heard favorably."

"I listen, madame, with interest," said Mazarin.

"Your eminence, it concerns the war which the king, my husband, now sustains against his rebellious subjects. You are, perhaps, ignorant that they are fighting in England," added she, with a melancholy smile, "and that, in a short time, they will fight in a much more decided fashion than they have done hitherto."

"I am completely ignorant of it, madame," said the cardinal, accompanying his words with a slight shrug of the shoulders; "alas, our own wars have quite absorbed the time

and the mind of a poor, incapable, and infirm minister like myself."

"Well, then, your eminence," said the queen, "I must inform you that Charles I., my husband, is on the eve of a decisive engagement. In case of a check—" (Mazarin made a slight movement) "one must foresee everything; in case of a check, he desires to retire into France, and to live here as a private individual. What do you say to this project?"

The cardinal had listened without permitting a single fiber of his face to betray what he felt, and his smile remained as it ever was—false and flattering, and, when the queen finished speaking, he said:

"Do you think, madame, that France, agitated and disturbed as it is, would be a safe refuge for a dethroned king? How will the crown, which is so scarce firmly set on the head of Louis IV., support a double weight?"

"This weight was not so heavy when I was in peril," interrupted the queen, with a sad smile, "and I ask no more for my husband than has been done for me; you see that we are very humble monarchs, sir."

"Oh, you, madame, you," the cardinal hastened to say, in order to cut short the explanations which he foresaw were coming, "with regard to you, that is another thing; a daughter of Henry IV., of that great, that sublime sovereign——"

"All which does not prevent you refusing hospitality to his son-in-law, sir! Nevertheless, you ought to remember that that great, that sublime monarch, when proscribed at one time, as my husband may be, demanded aid from England, and that England accorded it to him; and it is but just to say that Queen Elizabeth was not his niece."

"*Peccato!*" said Mazarin, writhing beneath this simple eloquence, "your majesty does not understand me; you judge my intentions wrongly, and that is because doubtless I explain myself ill in French."

"Speak Italian, sir: ere the cardinal, your predecessor, sent our mother, Marie de Medicis, to die in exile, she taught us that language. If anything yet remains of that great, that sublime king, Henry, of whom you have just spoken, he would be much surprised at so little pity for his family being united to such a profound admiration of himself."

The perspiration hung in large drops upon Mazarin's brow.

"That admiration is, on the contrary, so great, so real,

madame," returned Mazarin, without noticing the change of language offered to him by the queen, "that if the king, Charles I., whom heaven protect from evil! came into France I would offer him my house—my own house—but, alas! it would be but an unsafe retreat. Some day the people will burn that house, as they burned that of the Maréchal d'Ancre. Poor Concino Concini! and yet he but desired the good of the people."

"Yes, my lord, like yourself!" said the queen ironically.

Mazarin pretended not to understand the double meaning of his own sentence, but continued to compassionate the fate of Concino Concini.

"Well, then, your eminence," said the queen, becoming impatient, "what is your answer?"

"Madame," cried Mazarin, more and more moved, "will your majesty permit me to give you counsel?"

"Speak, sir," replied the queen; "the counsels of so prudent a man as yourself ought certainly to be good."

"Madame, believe me, the king ought to defend himself to the last."

"He has done so, sir, and this last battle, which he encounters with resources much inferior to those of the enemy, proves that he will not yield without a struggle; but, in case he is beaten?"

"Well, madame, in that case my advice—I know that I am very bold to offer advice to your majesty—my advice is that the king should not leave his kingdom. Absent kings are very soon forgotten; if he passes over to France his cause is lost."

"But then," persisted the queen, "if such be your advice, and you have his interest at heart, send him some help of men and money, for I can do nothing for him: I have sold even to my last diamond to aid him. If I had had a single ornament left, I should have bought wood this winter to make a fire for my daughter and myself."

"Oh, madame," said Mazarin, "your majesty knows not what you ask. On the day when foreign succor follows in the train of a king to replace him on his throne, it is an avowal that he no longer possesses the help and the love of his subjects."

"To the point, sir," said the queen, "to the point, and answer me, yes or no; if the king persists in remaining in England, will you send him succor? If he comes to France, will you accord him hospitality? What do you intend to do?—speak."

"I will go this instant and consult the queen, and we will refer the affair at once to the parliament."

"With which you are at war, is it not so? You will charge Broussel to report it. Enough, sir, enough. I understand you, or rather, I am wrong. Go to the parliament; for it was from this parliament, the enemy of monarchs, that the daughter of the great, the sublime Henry IV., whom you so much admire, received the only relief this winter, which prevented her from dying of hunger and cold."

And with these words Henrietta rose in majestic indignation, while the cardinal, raising his hands clasped toward her, exclaimed, "Ah, madame, madame, how little you know me, *mon Dieu!*"

"It signifies little," said Mazarin, when he was alone; "it gave me pain, and it is an ungracious part to play. But I have said nothing either to the one or to the other. Bernouin!" Bernouin entered.

"See if the young man with the black doublet and the short hair, who was with me just now, is still in the palace."

Bernouin went out, and soon returned with Comminges, who was on guard.

"Your eminence," said Comminges, "as I was reconducting the young man for whom you have asked, he approached the glass door of the gallery, and gazed intently upon some object, doubtless the picture by Raphael, which is opposite the door. He reflected for a second, and then descended the stairs. I believe I saw him mount on a gray horse and leave the palace court. But is not your eminence going to the queen?"

"For what purpose?"

"Monsieur de Guitant, my uncle, has just told me that her majesty has received news of the army."

"It is well—I will go."

Comminges had seen rightly, and Mordaunt had really acted as he had related. In crossing the gallery parallel to the large glass gallery, he perceived De Winter, who was waiting until the queen had finished her negotiation.

At this sight the young man stopped short, not in admiration of Raphael's picture, but as if fascinated at the sight of some terrible object. His eyes dilated, and a shudder ran through his body. One would have said that he longed to break through the wall of glass which separated him from his enemy; for if Comminges had seen with what an expression of hatred the eyes of this young man were fixed upon De Winter, he would not have doubted for an instant but that the English lord was his mortal foe.

But he stopped—doubtless to reflect; for, instead of allowing his first impulse, which had been to go straight to Lord De Winter, to carry him away, he leisurely descended the staircase, left the palace with his head down, mounted his horse, which he reined in at the corner of the Rue Richelieu, and with his eyes fixed on the gate, he waited until the queen's carriage had left the court.

He did not wait long, for the queen scarcely remained a quarter of an hour with Mazarin; but this quarter of an hour of expectation appeared a century to him. At last the heavy machine, which was called a chariot in those days, came out, rumbling against the gates, and De Winter, still on horseback, bent again to the door to converse with her majesty.

The horses started into a trot, and took the road to the Louvre, which they entered. Before leaving the convent of the Carmelites, Henrietta had desired her daughter to attend her at the palace, which she had inhabited for a long time, and which she had only left because their poverty seemed to them more difficult to bear in gilded chambers.

Mordaunt followed the carriage, and when he had watched it drive under the somber arches, he went and stationed himself under a wall over which the shadow was extended, and remained motionless, amid the moldings of Jean Goujon, like a bas-relievo representing an equestrian statue.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW, SOMETIMES, THE UNHAPPY MISTAKE CHANCE FOR PROVIDENCE.

"WELL, madame," said De Winter, when the queen had dismissed her attendants.

"Well, my lord, what I had foreseen has come to pass."

"What? does the cardinal refuse to receive the king? France refuse hospitality to an unfortunate prince? But it is for the first time, madame."

"I did not say France, my lord, I said the cardinal, and the cardinal is not even a Frenchman."

"But did you see the queen?"

"It is useless," replied Henrietta; "the queen will not say yes when the cardinal has said no. Are you not aware that this Italian directs everything, both indoors and out? And, moreover, I should not be surprised had we been forestalled by Cromwell; he was embarrassed while speaking to me, and

yet quite firm in his determination to refuse. Then, did you not observe the agitation in the Palais Royal, the passing to and fro of busy people? Can they have received any news, my lord?"

"Not from England, madame. I made such haste that I am certain of not having been forestalled. I set out three days ago, passing miraculously through the Puritan army, and I took post-horses with my servant Tony: the horses upon which we were mounted were bought in Paris. Besides, the king, I am certain, awaits your majesty's reply before risking anything."

"You will tell him, my lord," resumed the queen, despairingly, "that I can do nothing: that I have suffered as much as himself—more than he has—obliged as I am to eat the bread of exile, and to ask hospitality from false friends who smile at my tears; and as regards his royal person, he must sacrifice it generously, and die like a king. I shall go and die by his side."

"Madame, madame!" exclaimed De Winter, "your majesty abandons yourself to despair; and yet, perhaps, there still remains some hope."

"No friends left, my lord; no other friends left in the whole world but yourself! Oh God!" exclaimed the poor queen, raising her eyes to heaven, "have you indeed taken back all the generous hearts which existed in the world?"

"I hope not, madame," replied De Winter thoughtfully; "I once spoke to you of four men."

"What can be done with four men?"

"Four devoted, resolute men can do much, be assured, madame; and those of whom I speak have done much at one time."

"And these men were your friends?"

"One of them held my life in his hands, and gave it to me. I know not whether he is still my friend; but since that time I have remained his."

"And these men are in France, my lord?"

"I believe so."

"Tell me their names; perhaps I have heard them mentioned, and might be able to aid you in finding them."

"One of them was called the Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Oh! my lord, if I do not mistake, the Chavalier d'Artagnan is a lieutenant of the guards; but take care, for I fear that this man is devoted entirely to the cardinal."

"That would be a misfortune," said De Winter; "and I shall begin to think that we are really doomed."

"But the others," said the queen, who clung to this last hope as a shipwrecked man clings to the remains of his vessel: "the others, my lord!"

"The second—I heard his name by chance; for before fighting us, these four gentlemen told us their names; the second was called the Count de la Fère. As for the two others, I had so much the habit of calling them by nicknames, that I have forgotten their real ones."

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, it is a matter of great urgency to find them out," said the queen, "since you think these worthy gentlemen might be so useful to the king."

"Oh, yes," said De Winter, "for they are the same men."

"Well then, my lord, they must be found; but what can four men, or rather three men, do? for I tell you, you must not count on Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"It will be one valiant sword the less, but there will remain still three, without reckoning my own; now four devoted men round the king to protect him from his enemies, to be at his side in battle, to aid him in counsel, to escort him in flight, are sufficient—not to make the king a conqueror, but to save him if conquered; and whatever Mazarin may say—once on the shores of France, your royal husband may find as many retreats and asylums as the sea-bird finds in storms."

"Seek them, my lord—seek these gentleman; and if they will consent to go with you to England, I will give to each a duchy the day that we re-ascend the throne, besides as much gold as would pave Whitehall. Seek them, my lord. Seek them, I conjure you."

"I will search for them well, madame," said De Winter, "and doubtless I shall find them—but time fails me. Has your majesty forgotten that the king expects your reply, and awaits it in agony?"

"Then, indeed, we are lost," cried the queen, in the fullness of a broken heart.

At this moment the door opened, and the young Henrietta appeared; then the queen, with that wonderful strength which is the heroism of a mother, repressed her tears, and motioned to De Winter to change the subject of conversation.

"What do you want, Henrietta?" she demanded.

"My mother," replied the young princess, "a cavalier has just entered the Louvre, and wishes to present his respects to your majesty; he arrives from the army, and has, he says, a letter to remit to you on the part of the Maréchal de Grammont, I think."

"Ah!" said the queen to De Winter, "he is one of my faithful adherents; but do you not observe, my dear lord, that we are so poorly served that it is my daughter who fills the office of introducer?"

"Madame, have pity on me," exclaimed De Winter; "you break my heart!"

"And who is this cavalier, Henrietta?" asked the queen.

"I saw him from the window, madame; he is a young man who appears scarcely sixteen years of age, and who is called the Viscount de Bragelonne."

The queen, smiling, made a sign with her head; the young princess opened the door, and Raoul appeared on the threshold.

Advancing a few steps toward the queen, he knelt down.

"Madame," said he, "I bear to your majesty a letter from my friend the Count de Guiche, who told me he had the honor of being your servant; this letter contains important news, and the expression of his respect."

At the name of the Count de Guiche, a blush spread over the cheeks of the young princess, and the queen glanced at her with some degree of severity.

"You told me that the letter was from the Maréchal de Grammont, Henrietta!" said the queen.

"I thought so, madame," stammered the young girl.

"It is my fault, madame," said Raoul. "I did announce myself, in truth, as coming on the part of the Maréchal de Grammont; but being wounded in the right arm, he was unable to write, and therefore the Count de Guiche served as his secretary."

"There has been fighting, then?" asked the queen, motioning to Raoul to rise.

"Yes, madame," said the young man.

At this announcement of a battle having taken place, the young princess opened her lips as if to ask a question of interest; but her lips closed again without articulating a word, while the color gradually faded from her cheeks.

The queen saw this, and doubtless her maternal heart translated this emotion, for addressing Raoul again:

"And no evil has happened to the young Count de Guiche?" she asked; "for not only is he our servant, as you say, sir, but more; he is one of our friends."

"No, madame," replied Raoul; "on the contrary, he gained great glory on that day, and had the honor of being embraced by his highness the prince on the field of battle."

The young princess clasped her hands; and then, ashamed

of having been betrayed into such a demonstration of joy, she half turned away, and bent over a vase of roses, as if to inhale their odor.

"Let us see," said the queen, "what the count says." And she opened the letter and read:

"MADAME: Being unable to have the honor of writing to you myself, by reason of a wound which I have received in the right hand, I have commanded my son, the Count de Guiche, who with his father, is equally your humble servant, to write to tell you that we have just gained the battle of Lens, and that this victory cannot fail to give great power to the Cardinal Mazarin and to the queen over the affairs of Europe. If her majesty will have faith in my counsels, she ought to profit by this event to address at this moment, in favor of her august husband, the court of France. The Viscount de Bragelonne, who will have the honor of remitting this letter to your majesty, is the friend of my son, to whom he owes his life; he is a gentleman in whom your majesty can confide entirely, in the case when your majesty may have some verbal or written order to forward to me.

"I have the honor to be, with respect, etc.,

"MARECHAL DE GRAMMONT."

At the moment, when mention occurred of his having rendered a service to the count, Raoul could not help turning his eyes toward the young princess, and then he saw in her eyes an expression of infinite gratitude to the young man; he no longer doubted that the daughter of King Charles the First loved his friend.

"The battle of Lens gained!" said the queen; "they are lucky indeed for me—they can gain battles! Yes, the Maréchal de Grammont is right; this will change the aspect of affairs; but I much fear it will do nothing for ours, even if it does not harm them. This is recent news, sir," continued she, "and I thank you for having made such haste to bring it to me; without this letter, I should not have heard it till to-morrow—perhaps after to-morrow—the last of all Paris."

"Madame," said Raoul, "the Louvre is but the second palace which this news has reached; it is as yet unknown to all, and I had sworn to the Count de Guiche to remit this letter to your majesty ere even I should embrace my guardian."

"Your guardian! is he too a Bragelonne?" asked Lord de Winter. "I knew formerly a Bragelonne—is he still alive?"

"No, sir, he is dead; and I believe it is from him that my guardian, whose near relation he was, inherited the estate from which I take my name."

"And your guardian, sir," asked the queen, who could not help feeling some interest in the handsome young man before her, "what is his name?"

"The Count de la Fère, madame," replied the young man, bowing.

De Winter made a gesture of surprise, and the queen turned to him with a start of joy.

"The Count de la Fère!" cried De Winter in his turn. "Oh, sir, reply, I entreat you—is not the Count de la Fère a noble, whom I remember handsome and brave, a musketeer under Louis XIII., and who must be now about forty-seven or forty-eight years of age?"

"Yes, sir, you are right in every respect."

"And who served under a borrowed name?"

"Under the name of Athos. Latterly I heard his friend Monsieur d'Artagnan give him that name."

"That is it, madame, that is the same. God be praised! And he is in Paris?" continued he, addressing Raoul; then, turning to the queen—"We may still hope. Providence has declared for us, since I have found this brave man again in so miraculous a manner. And, sir, where does he reside, pray?"

"The Count de la Fère lodges in the Rue Guénegaud, Hotel du Grand Roi Charlemagne."

"Thanks, sir. Inform this dear friend that he may remain within. I shall go and see him immediately."

"Sir, I obey with pleasure, if her majesty will permit me to depart."

"Go, Monsieur de Bragelonne," said the queen, "and be assured of our affection."

Raoul bent respectfully before the two princesses, and, bowing to De Winter, departed.

The queen and De Winter continued to converse for some time in low voices, in order that the young princess should not overhear them; but the precaution was needless; she was in deep converse with her own thoughts.

Then, when De Winter rose to take leave:

"Listen, my lord," said the queen; "I have preserved this diamond cross which came from my mother, and this order of St. Michael, which came from my husband. They are worth about fifty thousand pounds. I had sworn to die of hunger rather than to part with these precious pledges; but now that this ornament may be useful to him or to his

defenders, everything must be sacrificed to the hope of it. Take them, and if you need money for your expedition, sell them fearlessly, my lord. But should you find the means of retaining them, remember, my lord, that I shall esteem you as having rendered the greatest service which a gentleman can render to a queen; and in the day of my prosperity, he who brings me this order and this cross will be blessed by me and my children."

"Madame," replied De Winter, "your majesty will be served by a man devoted to you. I hasten to deposit these two objects in a safe place, nor should I accept them if the resources of our ancient fortune were left to us; but our estates are confiscated, our ready money is exhausted, and we are reduced to turn into resources everything we possess. In an hour hence I shall be with the Count de la Fère, and to-morrow your majesty shall have a definite answer."

The queen tendered her hand to Lord de Winter, who, kissing it respectfully, went out, traversing alone, unattended, those large dark and deserted apartments, and brushing away tears which, blasé as he was by fifty years spent as a courtier, he could not help shedding at the spectacle of this royal distress, so dignified and yet so intense.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE UNCLE AND THE NEPHEW.

THE horse and servant belonging to De Winter were waiting for him at the door; he sauntered toward his abode very thoughtfully, looking behind him from time to time to contemplate the dark and silent façade of the Louvre. It was then that he saw a horseman, as it were, detach himself from the wall and follow him at a little distance. In leaving the Palais Royale he remembered to have observed a similar shadow.

"Tony," he said, motioning to his groom to approach.

"Here I am, my lord."

"Did you remark that man who is following us?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Who is he?"

"I do not know, only he has followed your grace from the Palais Royale, stopped at the Louvre to wait for you, and now leaves the Louvre with you."

"Some spy of the cardinal," said De Winter to him aside.

"Let us pretend not to notice that he is watching us."

And spurring on, he pursued the labyrinth of streets which led to his hotel, situated near the Marais, for having for so long a time lived near the Place Royale, Lord de Winter naturally returned to lodge near his ancient dwelling.

The unknown put his horse into a gallop.

De Winter dismounted at his hotel, went up into his apartment, intending to watch the spy; but as he was about to place his gloves and hat on a table, he saw reflected in a glass opposite to him a figure which stood on the threshold of the room. He turned round, and Mordaunt was before him.

There was a moment of frozen silence between these two men.

"Sir," said De Winter, "I thought I had already made you aware that I am weary of this persecution; withdraw, then, or I shall call, and have you turned out, as you were in London. I am not your uncle; I know you not."

"My uncle," replied Mordaunt, with his harsh and bantering tone, "you are mistaken; you will not have me turned out this time, as you did in London; you dare not. As for denying that I am your nephew, you will think twice about it, now that I have learned some things of which I was ignorant a few days ago."

"And how does it concern me what you have learned?" said De Winter.

"Oh, it concerneth you much, my uncle, I am sure; and you will soon be of my opinion," added he, with a smile which sent a shudder through the veins of him whom he addressed. "When I presented myself before you for the first time in London, it was to ask you what had become of my wealth; the second time it was to demand who had sullied my name; and this time I come before you to ask a question far more terrible than any other: to ask you, my lord, what have you done with your sister—your sister, who was my mother?"

De Winter shrank back from the fire of those scorching eyes.

"Your mother?" he said.

"Yes, my lord, my mother," replied the young man, advancing into the room until he was face to face with Lord de Winter, and crossing his arms. "I have asked the headsman of Béthune," he said, his voice hoarse and his face livid with passion and grief; "and the headsman of Béthune gave me a reply."

De Winter fell back into a chair as if struck by a thunderbolt, and in vain attempted to answer.

"Yes," continued the young man, "all is now explained;

with this key the abyss is opened. My mother had inherited an estate from her husband, and you have assassinated my mother; my name would have secured to me the paternal estate, and you have despoiled me of my name, you have deprived me of my fortune. I am no longer astonished that you knew me not. I am not surprised that you refused to recognize me. When a man is a robber, it is unbecoming to call him a nephew whom one has impoverished; when one is a murderer, to term that man whom one has made an orphan a relative."

These words produced a contrary effect to what Mordaunt had anticipated. De Winter remembered the monster that milady had been; he rose, dignified and calm, restraining by the severity of his look the wild glances of the young man.

"You desire to fathom this horrible secret?" said De Winter; "well, then, so be it. Know, then, what that woman was for whom to-day you come to call me to account. That woman had, in all probability, poisoned my brother, and in order to inherit from me she was about to assassinate me in my turn. I have proof of it. What say you to that?"

"I say that she was my mother."

"She caused the unfortunate Duke of Buckingham to be stabbed by a man who was, ere that, honest, good, and pure. What say you to that crime, of which I have the proof?"

"She was my mother."

"On our return to France she had a young woman who was attached to one of her foes poisoned in the convent of the Augustines at Béthune. Will this crime persuade you of the justice of her punishment? of this I have the proofs."

"Silence, sir—she was my mother," exclaimed the young man, his face running with sweat, his hair, like Hamlet's, standing upon his forehead, and raging with fury; "she was my mother! her crimes, I know them not—her disorders, I know them not—her vices, I know them not. But this I know, that I had a mother, that five men leagued against one woman, murdered her clandestinely by night—silently—like cowards. I know that you were one of them, my uncle, and that you cried louder than the others—'she must die.' Therefore I warn you—and listen well to my words, that they may be engraved on your memory, never to be forgotten—this murder which has robbed me of everything—this murder, which has deprived me of my name—this murder, which has impoverished me—this murder, which has made me corrupt, wicked, implacable—I shall summon you to account for it first, and then those who were your accomplices—when I discover them!"

With hatred in his eyes, foaming at his mouth, and his fist extended, Mordaunt had advanced one more step—a threatening, terrible step—toward De Winter. The latter put his hand to his sword, and said, with the smile of a man who for thirty years has jested with death:

“Would you assassinate me, sir? Then I shall recognize you as my nephew, for you are a worthy son of such a mother.”

“No,” replied Mordaunt, forcing all the veins in his face, and the muscles of his body, to resume their usual places and to be calm; “no, I shall not kill you—at least, not at this moment, for without you I could not discover the others. But when I have found them, then tremble, sir. I have stabbed the headsman of Béthune—stabbed him without mercy or pity, and he was the least guilty of you all.”

With these words the young man went out, and descended the stair sufficiently calm to pass unobserved; then, upon the lowest landing-place, he passed Tony leaning over the balustrade, waiting only for a call from his master to mount to his room.

But De Winter did not call; crushed, enfeebled, he remained standing, and with listening ear; then only, when he had heard the step of the horse going away, he fell back on a chair saying:

“My God, I thank Thee that he knows me alone.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PATERNAL AFFECTION.

WHILE this terrible scene was passing at Lord de Winter's, Athos, seated near his window, his elbow on the table, and his head supported on his hand, was listening intently to Raoul's account of the adventures he met with on his journey, and the details of the battle.

Listening to the relation of those first emotions so fresh and pure, the fine, noble face of Athos betrayed indescribable pleasure; he inhaled the tones of that young voice as harmonious music. He forgot all that was dark in the past, and that was cloudy in the future. It almost seemed as if the return of this much-loved boy had changed his fears into hopes. Athos was happy—happy as he had never been before.

"And you assisted and took part in this great battle, Bragelonne?" said the ancient musketeer.

"Yes, sir."

"And it was a hard one?"

"His highness the prince charged eleven times in person."

"He is a great commander, Bragelonne?"

"He is a hero, sir; I did not lose sight of him for an instant. Oh! how fine it is to be called Condé, and to be so worthy of such a name."

"He is calm and radiant, is he not?"

"As calm as at parade; as radiant as at a fête. When we went up to the enemy, it was slowly; we were forbidden to draw first, and we were marching toward the Spaniards, who were on a heighth with lowered muskets. When we arrived about thirty paces from them, the prince turned round to the soldiers, 'Comrades,' he said, 'you are about to suffer a furious discharge; but——' There was such dead silence that friends and enemies could have heard these words; then raising his sword, 'Sound trumpets!' he cried."

"Well, very good; you will do as much when the opportunity occurs—will you, Raoul?"

"I know not, sir, but I thought it was very fine and grand."

"Were you afraid, Raoul?" asked the count.

"Yes, sir," replied the young man naïvely; "I felt a great chill at my heart, and at the word 'fire,' which resounded in Spanish from the enemy's ranks, I closed my eyes and thought of you."

"In honest truth, Raoul?" said Athos, pressing his hand.

"Yes, sir; at that instant there was such a firing that one might have supposed that the infernal regions were opened, and those who were not killed felt the heat of the flames. I opened my eyes, astonished at my being alive, or at least unhurt; a third of the squadron were lying on the ground, mutilated and bloody. At this moment I encountered the eye of the prince, and I had but one thought, and that was that he was observing me. I spurred on, and found myself in the enemy's ranks."

"And the prince was pleased with you?"

"He told me so, at least, sir, when he desired me to return to Paris with Monsieur de Châtillon, who was charged to carry the news to the queen, and to bring the colors we had taken. 'Go,' said he, 'the enemy will not rally for fifteen days, and until that time I have no need of your service. Go and see those whom you love, and who love you, and tell my

sister De Longueville that I thank her for the present she has made me of you.' And I came, sir," added Raoul, gazing at the count with a smile of real affection, "for I thought you would be glad to see me again."

Athos drew the young man toward him, and pressed his lips to his brow, as he would have done to a young daughter.

"And now, Raoul," said he, "you are launched; you have dukes for friends, a marshal of France for a godfather, a prince of the blood as commander, and on the day of your return you have been received by two queens; it is rather well for a novice."

"Oh, sir!" said Raoul, suddenly, "you recall something to me, which, in my haste to relate my exploits, I had forgotten; it is that there was with her majesty, the queen of England, a gentleman who, when I pronounced your name, uttered a cry of surprise and joy; he said he was a friend of yours—asked your address, and is coming to see you."

"What is his name?"

"I did not dare ask, sir; he spoke elegantly, although I thought from his accent he was an Englishman."

"Ah!" said Athos, leaning down his head as if to remember who it could be. Then, when he raised it again, he was struck by the presence of a man who was standing at the open door, and was gazing at him with a compassionate air.

"Lord de Winter?" exclaimed the count.

"Athos, my friend!"

And the two gentlemen were for an instant locked in each other's arms; then Athos, looking into his friend's face, and taking him by both hands, said:

"What ails you, my lord? you appear as unhappy as I am happy."

"Yes, truly, dear friend; and I may even say that the sight of you increases my dismay."

And De Winter glancing round him, Raoul quickly understood that the two friends wished to be alone, and he therefore left the room unaffectedly.

"Come, now that we are alone," said Athos, "let us talk of yourself."

"While we are alone let us speak of ourselves," replied De Winter. "He is here."

"Who?"

"Milady's son."

Athos, who was again struck by this name, which seemed to pursue him like an echo, hesitated for a moment, then slightly knitting his brows, he calmly said:

"I know it; Grimaud met him between Béthune and Arras, and then came here to warn me of his presence."

"Does Grimaud know him, then?"

"No; but he was present at the deathbed of a man who knew him."

"The headsman of Béthune?" exclaimed De Winter.

"You know about that?" cried Athos, astonished.

"He has just left me," replied De Winter, "after telling me all. Ah! my friend! what a horrible scene! Why did we not destroy the child with the mother?"

"What need you fear?" said Athos, recovering from the instinctive fear he had at first experienced, by the aid of reason; "are we not here to defend ourselves? Is this young man an assassin by profession—a murderer in cold blood? He has killed the executioner of Béthune in an impulse of passion, but now his fury is assuaged."

De Winter smiled sorrowfully, and shook his head.

"Do you not then know the race?" said he.

"Pooh!" said Athos, trying to smile in his turn. "It must have lost its ferocity in the second generation. Besides, my friend, Providence has warned us that we may be on our guard. All we can do is to wait. Let us wait; and, as I said before, let us speak of yourself. What brings you to Paris?"

"Affairs of importance which you shall know later. But what is this that I hear from her majesty, the Queen of England? Monsieur d'Artagnan is with Mazarin! Pardon my frankness, dear friend. I neither hate nor blame the cardinal, and your opinions will be held ever sacred by me; do you happen to belong to this man?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," replied Athos, "is in the service; he is a soldier, and obeys the constituted authority. Monsieur d'Artagnan is not rich, and has need of his position as lieutenant to enable him to live. Millionaires like yourself, my lord, are rare in France."

"Alas!" said De Winter, "I am at this moment as poor as he is, if not poorer; but to return to our subject."

"Well, then, you wish to know if I am of Mazarin's party. No. Pardon my frankness, also, my lord."

"I am obliged to you, count, for this pleasing intelligence! You make me young and happy again by it. Ah! so you are not a Mazarinist? Delightful! Indeed, you could not belong to him. But pardon me, are you free?"

"What mean you by free?"

"I mean to ask if you be not married?"

"Ah! as to that, no," replied Athos, laughing.

"Because that young man—so handsome, so elegant, so polished——"

"He is a child that I have adopted, and who does not even know who was his father."

"Very well—you are always the same, Athos, great and generous. Are you still friends with Monsieur Porthos and Monsieur Aramis?"

"And add Monsieur d'Artagnan, too, my lord. We still remain four friends devoted to each other; but when it becomes a question of serving the cardinal, or of fighting, of being Mazarinists or Frondeists, then we are only two."

"Is Monsieur Aramis with D'Artagnan?" asked Lord de Winter.

"No," said Athos: "Monsieur Aramis does me the honor to share my opinions."

"Could you put me in communication with your witty and agreeable friend? Is he changed?"

"He has become an abbé, that is all."

"You alarm me; his profession must have made him renounce any great undertakings."

"On the contrary," said Athos, smiling, "he has never been so much a musketeer as since he became an abbé, and you will find him a veritable soldier."

"Could you engage to bring him to me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, on the Pont du Louvre?"

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Athos, smiling, "you have a duel in prospect."

"Yes, count, and a splendid duel, too; a duel in which I hope you will take your part."

"Where are we to go to, my lord?"

"To her majesty the Queen of England, who has desired me to present you to her."

"This is an enigma," said Athos; "but it matters not; from the moment that you have guessed the word, I ask no further. Will your lordship do me the honor to sup with me?"

"Thanks, count, no," replied De Winter. "I own to you that that young man's visit has taken away my appetite, and will probably deprive me of sleep. What undertaking can have brought him to Paris? It was not to meet me that he came, for he was ignorant of my journey. This young man terrifies me, my lord; for there lies in him a sanguinary predisposition."

"What occupies him in England?"

"He is one of Cromwell's most enthusiastic disciples."

• But what has attached him to this cause? His father and mother were Catholics, I believe?"

"His hatred of the king, who deprived him of his estates, and forbade him to bear the name of De Winter."

"And how is he now called?"

"Mordaunt."

"A Puritan, yet, disguised as a monk, he travels alone in France."

"Do you say as a monk?"

"It was thus, and by mere accident—may God pardon me if I blaspheme—that he heard the confession of the executioner of Béthune."

"Then I understand it all; he has been sent by Cromwell to Mazarin, and the queen guessed rightly; we have been forestalled. Everything is clear to me now. Adieu, count, till to-morrow."

"But the night is dark," said Athos, perceiving that Lord de Winter seemed more uneasy than he wished to show; "and you have no servant."

"I have Tony, a good but simple youth."

"Holloa there, Grimaud, Olivain, and Blaisois, call the viscount here, and take the musket with you."

Blaisois was the tall youth, half groom, half peasant, whom we saw at the Château de Bragelonne, whom Athos had christened by the name of his province.

"Viscount," said Athos to Raoul as he entered, "you will conduct my lord as far as his hotel, and permit no one to approach him."

"Oh! count," said De Winter, "for whom do you take me?"

"For a stranger who does not know Paris," said Athos, "and to whom the viscount will show the way."

De Winter shook him by the hand.

"Grimaud," said Athos, "put yourself at the head of the troop, and beware of the monk."

Grimaud shuddered, and nodding, awaited the departure, regarding the butt of his musket with silent eloquence. Then, obeying the orders given him by Athos, he headed the little procession, bearing the torch in one hand and the musket in the other, until it reached the door of De Winter's inn, when, striking on the door with his fist, he bowed to my lord without saying a word.

The same order was pursued in returning; nor did Grimaud's searching glance discover anything of a suspicious appearance, save a dark shadow in ambuscade at the corner

of the Rue Guénégaud of the Quai. He fancied also that in going he had already observed the street watcher who had attracted his attention. He pushed on toward him, but before he could reach it the shadow had disappeared into an alley, in which Grimaud deemed it scarcely prudent to pursue it.

The next day, on awaking, the count perceived Raoul by his bedside. The young man was already dressed, and was reading a new book by M. Chapelain.

"Already up, Raoul?" exclaimed the count.

"Yes, sir," replied Raoul, with a slight hesitation. "I did not sleep well."

"You, Raoul, not sleep well! then you must have something on your mind!" said Athos.

"Sir, you will, perhaps, think that I am in a great hurry to leave you, when I have only just arrived, but——"

"Have you only two days of leave, Raoul?"

"On the contrary, sir, I have ten; nor is it to the camp that I wish to go."

"Where then?" said Athos, smiling, "if it be not a secret. You are now almost a man, since you have made your first passage of arms, and have acquired the right to go where you will without telling me."

"Never, sir," said Raoul, "as long as I possess the happiness of having you for a protector, shall I deem I have the right of freeing myself from a guardianship which is so valuable to me. I have, therefore, the wish to go and pass a day only at Blois. You look at me, and are going to laugh at me."

"No; on the contrary, I am not inclined to laugh," said Athos, suppressing a sigh. "You wish to see Blois again; it is but very natural."

"Then you permit me to go, and you are not angry in your heart!" exclaimed Raoul joyously.

"Certainly; and why should I regret what will give you pleasure?"

"Oh! how kind you are," exclaimed the young man, pressing his guardian's hand; "and I can set out immediately?"

"When you like, Raoul."

"Sir," said Raoul, as he turned to leave the room, "I have thought of one thing, and that is about the Duchess of Chevreuse, so kind to me, and to whom I owe my introduction to the prince."

"And you ought to thank her, Raoul. Well, try the Hotel de Luyne, Raoul, and ask if the duchess can receive you. I

am glad to see that you pay attention to the usages of the world. You must take Grimaud and Olivain."

"Both, sir?" asked Raoul, astonished.

"Both."

Raoul went out, and when Athos heard his young, joyous voice calling to Grimaud and Olivain, he sighed.

"It is very soon to leave me," he thought, "but he follows the common lot. Nature has made us thus; she looks on before her. He certainly likes that child, but will he love me less because he loves others?"

And Athos confessed to himself that he was unprepared for so prompt a departure; but Raoul was so happy that this consideration effaced everything else from the mind of his guardian.

Everything was ready at ten o'clock for their journey, and as Athos was seeing Raoul mount, a groom rode up from the Duchess de Chevreuse. He was charged to tell the Count de la Fère that she had learned the return of her youthful protégé, and also the manner he had conducted himself on the field, and she added that she should be very glad to offer him her congratulations.

"Tell her grace," replied Athos, "that the viscount has just mounted his horse to proceed to the Hotel de Luynes."

Then, with renewed instructions to Grimaud, Athos signified to Raoul that he could set out, and ended by reflecting that it was, perhaps, better that Raoul should be away from Paris at that moment.

CHAPTER XL.

AGAIN A QUEEN DEMANDING HELP.

ATHOS had not failed to send early to Aramis, and had given his letter to Blaisois, the only serving-man whom he had left. Blaisois found Bazin donning his bedell's gown, his services being required that day at Nôtre Dame.

Athos had desired Blaisois to try to speak to Aramis himself. Blaisois, a tall, simple youth, who understood nothing but what he was desired, asked, therefore, for the Abbé d'Herblay, and in spite of Bazin's assurances that his master was not at home, he persisted in such a manner as to put Bazin into a passion. Blaisois seeing Bazin in clerical guise, was little discomposed at his denials, and wanted to pass at all

risks, believing, too, that he with whom he had to do was endowed with the virtues of his cloth—namely, patience and Christian charity.

But Bazin, still the servant of a musketeer, when once the blood mounted to his fat cheeks, seized a broomstick and began thumping Blaisois, saying:

“You insulted the church; my friend, you have insulted the church!”

At this moment Aramis, aroused by this unusual disturbance, cautiously opened the door of his room; and Blaisois, looking reproachfully at the Cerberus, drew the letter from his pocket, and presented it to Aramis.

“From the Count de la Fère,” said Aramis. “All right.” And he retired into his room without even asking the cause of so much noise.

Blaisois returned disconsolate to the hotel of the Grand Roi Charlemagne, and when Athos inquired if his commission was executed, he related his adventure.

“You foolish fellow?” said Athos, laughing. “And you did not tell him that you came from me?”

“No, sir.”

At ten o’clock, Athos, with his habitual exactitude, was waiting on the Pont du Louvre, and was almost immediately joined by Lord de Winter.

They waited ten minutes, and then his lordship began to fear that Aramis was not coming to join them.

“Patience,” said Athos, whose eyes were fixed in the direction of the Rue du Bac, “patience; I see an abbé giving a cuff to a man, and a bow to a woman—that must be Aramis.”

It was he, in truth; having run against a young shop-keeper who was gaping at the crows, and who had splashed him, Aramis with one blow of his fist had distanced him ten paces.

At this moment one of his penitents passed, and as she was young and pretty, Aramis took off his cap to her, with his most gracious smile.

A most affectionate greeting, as one can well believe, took place between him and Lord de Winter.

“Where are we going?” inquired Aramis; “are we going to fight there, ’faith? I carry no sword this morning, and cannot return home to procure one.”

“No,” said Lord de Winter, “we are going to pay a visit to her majesty the queen of England.”

“Oh, very well,” replied Aramis; then, bending his face

down to Athos' ear, "what is the object of this visit?" continued he.

"I'faith, I know not; some evidence required from us, perhaps."

"May it not be about that cursed affair?" asked Aramis, "in which case I do not greatly care to go, for it will be to pocket some reproofs; and since I am used to give it to so many, I do not like to receive it myself."

"If it were so," answered Athos, "we should not be taken there by Lord de Winter, for he would come in for his share; he was one of us."

"Truly—yes, let us go."

On arriving at the Louvre, Lord de Winter entered first; indeed, there was but one porter to receive them at the gate.

It was impossible, in daylight, for the impoverished state of the habitation, which avaricious charity had conceded to an unfortunate queen, to pass unnoticed by Athos, Aramis, and even the Englishman. Large rooms, completely denuded of furniture, bare walls, upon which, here and there, shone the old gold moldings which had resisted time and neglect, windows with broken panes (which it was impossible to close fast), no carpets, nor guards, nor servants; this is what at first met the eyes of Athos, to which he, touching his companion's elbow, directed his attention by his glances.

"Mazarin is better lodged," said Aramis.

"Mazarin is almost king," answered Athos; "and Madame Henrietta is almost no longer queen."

"If you would condescend to be clever, Athos," observed Aramis, "I really do think you would be more so than poor Monsieur de Voiture."

Athos smiled.

The queen appeared to be impatiently expecting them, for at the first slight noise which she heard in the hall leading to her room, she came herself to the door to receive the courtiers of the days of misfortune.

"Enter and be welcome, gentlemen," she said.

The gentlemen entered and remained standing, but at a motion from the queen they seated themselves. Athos was calm and grave, but Aramis was furious; the sight of such royal misery exasperated him, and his eyes examined every new trace of poverty which presented itself.

"You are examining the luxury I enjoy?" said the queen, glancing sadly around her.

"Madame," replied Aramis, "I must ask your pardon, but I know not how to hide my indignation at seeing how a daughter of Henry IV. is treated at the court of France."

"Monsieur Aramis is not an officer?" asked the queen of Lord de Winter.

"That gentleman is the Abbé d'Herblay," replied he.

Aramis blushed. "Madame," he said, "I am an abbé, it is true, but I am so against my will; I never had a vocation for the bands; my cassock is fastened by one button only, and I am always ready to become a musketeer again. This morning, being ignorant that I should have the honor of seeing your majesty, I encumbered myself with this dress, but you will find me no less a man devoted to your majesty's service, in whatever you see fit to command me."

"The Abbé d'Herblay," resumed De Winter, "is one of those gallant musketeers belonging to his majesty, King Louis XIII., of whom I have spoken to you, madame." Then, turning toward Athos, he continued: "And this gentleman is that noble Count de la Fère, whose high reputation is so well known to your majesty."

"Gentlemen," said the queen, "a few years ago I had around me gentlemen, treasures, and armies; and by the lifting of a finger all these were occupied in my service. To-day, look around you, and it may astonish you, that in order to accomplish a plan which is dearer to me than life, I have only Lord de Winter, the friend of twenty years, and you gentlemen, whom I see for the first time, and whom I know but as my countrymen."

"It is enough," said Athos, bowing low, "if the life of three men can purchase yours, madame."

"I thank you, gentlemen. But hear me," continued she. "I am not only the most miserable of queens, but the most unhappy of mothers, the most despairing of wives. My children—two of them at least—the Duke of York and the Princess Elizabeth, are far away from me, exposed to the blows of the ambitious and our foes; my husband, the king, is leading in England so wretched an existence that it is no exaggeration to say that he seeks death, as a thing to be desired. Hold! gentlemen, there is the letter conveyed to me by Lord de Winter. Read it."

Obedying the queen, Athos read aloud the letter, which we have already seen, in which King Charles demanded whether the hospitality of France would be accorded to him.

"Well?" asked Athos, when he had closed the letter.

"Well," said the queen, "it has been refused."

The two friends exchanged a smile of contempt.

"And now," said Athos, "what is to be done? I have the honor to inquire from your majesty what you desire Mon-

sieur d'Herblay and myself to do in your service. We are ready."

"Ah, sir! you have a noble heart," exclaimed the queen, with a burst of gratitude; while Lord de Winter turned to her with a glance which said: "Did I not answer for them to you?"

"But you, sir?" said the queen to Aramis.

"I, madame," replied he, "follow Monsieur de la Fère wherever he leads, even were it to death, without demanding wherefore; but when it concerns your majesty's service, then," added he, looking at the queen with all the grace of his former days, "I precede the count."

"Well, then, gentlemen," said the queen, "since it is thus, and since you are willing to devote yourselves to the service of a poor princess whom the whole world has abandoned, this is what is required to be done for me. The king is alone with a few gentlemen, whom he fears to lose every day; surrounded by the Scotch, whom he distrusts, although he be himself a Scotchman. Since Lord de Winter left him I am distracted, sirs. I ask much, too much perhaps, for I have no title to ask it. Go to England, join the king, be his friends, his protectors, march to battle at his side, and be near him in the interior of his house, where conspiracies, more dangerous than the perils of war, increase every day. And in exchange of the sacrifice that you make, gentlemen, I promise—not to reward you, I believe that word would offend you—but to love you as a sister, to prefer you next to my husband and my children, to every one. I swear it before heaven."

And the queen raised her eyes solemnly upward.

"Madame," said Athos, "when must we set out?"

"You consent, then?" exclaimed the queen joyfully.

"Yes, madame, only it seems to me that your majesty goes too far in engaging to load us with a friendship so far above our merit. We do service to God, madame, in serving a prince so unfortunate, and a queen so virtuous. Madame, we are yours, body and soul."

"Oh, sirs," said the queen, moved to tears, "this is the first time for five years that I have felt anything like joy and hope. God—who can read my heart, all the gratitude I feel—will reward you! Save my husband! Save the king, and although you care not for the price which is placed upon a good action in this world, leave me the hope that we shall meet again, when I may be able to thank you myself. In the meantime I remain here. Have you any counsel to give me? From this moment I become your friend, and since you are engaged in my affairs, I ought to occupy myself in yours."

"Madame," replied Athos, "I have only to ask your majesty's prayers."

"And I," said Aramis, "I am alone in the world, and have only your majesty to serve."

The queen held out her hand, which they kissed, and having two letters prepared for the king—one from herself, and one written by the Princess Henrietta—she gave one to Athos and the other to Aramis, lest, should they be separated by chance, they might make themselves known to the king; after which they withdrew.

At the foot of the staircase De Winter stopped.

"Not to arouse suspicions, gentlemen," said he "go your way, and I will go mine, and this evening at nine o'clock we will assemble again at the gate St. Denis. We will travel on horseback as far as our horses can go, and afterward we can take the post. Once more, let me thank you, my good friends, thank you in my own name, and in the queen's."

The three gentlemen then shook hands, Lord de Winter taking the Rue St. Honore, and Athos and Aramis remaining together.

"Well," said Aramis, when they were alone, "what do you think of this business, my dear count?"

"Bad," replied Athos, "very bad."

"But you received it with enthusiasm."

"As I shall ever receive the defense of a great principle, my dear D'Herblay. Monarchs are only strong by the aid of the aristocracy, but aristocracy cannot exist without monarchs. Let us, then, support monarchy in order to support ourselves."

"We shall be murdered there," said Aramis. "I hate the English—they are coarse, like all people who drink beer."

"Would it be better to remain here?" said Athos, "and take a turn in the Bastille, or in the dungeon of Vincennes, for having favored the escape of Monsieur de Beaufort? Oh! i'faith, Aramis, believe me there is little left to regret. We avoid imprisonment, and we take the part of heroes—the choice is easy."

"It is true; but in everything, friend, one must always return to the same question—a stupid one I admit—but very necessary; have you any money?"

"Something like a hundred pistoles, that my farmer sent to me the day before I left Bragelonne; but out of that sum, I ought to leave fifty for Raoul—a young man must live respectably. I have then about fifty pistoles. And you?"

"As for me, I am quite sure that after turning out all my

pockets and emptying my drawers, I shall not find ten louis at home. Fortunately, Lord de Winter is rich."

"Lord de Winter is ruined for the moment, for Cromwell claims all his resources."

"Now is the time when Baron Porthos would be useful!"

"Now it is that I regret D'Artagnan."

"Let us entice them away."

"This secret, Aramis, does not belong to us; take my advice, then, and put no one into our confidence. And, moreover, in taking such a step, we should appear to be doubtful of ourselves. Let us regret to ourselves for our own sakes, but not speak of it."

"You are right; but what are you going to do till this evening; I have two things to postpone."

"And what are they?"

"First, a thrust with the coadjutor, whom I met last night at Madame de Rambouillet's, and whom I found particular in his remarks respecting me."

"Oh, fie—a quarrel between priests, a duel between allies!"

"What can I do, friend; he is a bully, and so am I; his cassock is a burden to him, and I think I have had enough of mine; in fact, there is so much resemblance between us, that I sometimes believe he is Aramis, and I am the coadjutor. This kind of life fatigues and oppresses me; besides, he is a turbulent fellow who will ruin our party. I am convinced that if I gave him a box on the ear, such as I gave this morning to the little citizen who splashed me, it would change the appearance of things."

"And I, my dear Aramis," quietly replied Athos, "I think it would only change Monsieur de Retz's appearance. Take my advice, leave things as they are; besides, you are neither of you now your own masters; he belongs to the Fronde, and you to the Queen of England. But now we must part. I have one or two visits to make, and a letter to write. Call for me at eight o'clock, or shall I wait supper for you at seven?"

"That will do very well," said Aramis. "I have twenty visits to make, and as many letters to write."

They then separated. Athos went to pay a visit to Madame de Vendôme, left his name at Madame de Chevreuse's, and wrote the following letter to D'Artagnan:

"DEAR FRIEND: I am about to set off with Aramis on important business. I wished to make my adieux to you, but

time did not allow me. Remember that I write to you now to repeat how much affection I have for you.

“Raoul is gone to Blois, and is ignorant of my departure; watch over him in my absence as much as you possibly can, and if by chance you receive no news of me three months hence, tell him to open a packet which he will find addressed to him in my bronze casket at Blois, and of which I send you the key.

“Embrace Porthos from Aramis and myself. Adieu, perhaps farewell.”

At the hour agreed upon Aramis arrived; he was dressed as an officer, and had the old sword at his side which he had drawn so often, and which he was more than ever ready to draw.

“By the by,” he said, “I think that we are decidedly wrong to depart thus, without leaving a line for Porthos and D’Artagnan.”

“The thing is done, dear friend,” said Athos; “I foresaw that, and have embraced them both from you and myself.”

“You are a wonderful man, my dear count,” said Aramis; “you think of everything.”

“Well, have you made up your mind to this journey?”

“Quite; and now that I reflect about it, I am glad to leave Paris at this moment.”

“And so am I,” replied Athos; “my only regret is not having seen D’Artagnan; but that rascal is so cunning, he might have guessed our project.”

When supper was over Blaisois entered. “Sir,” said he, “here is Monsieur d’Artagnan’s answer.”

“But I did not tell you there was an answer, stupid!” said Athos.

“And I set off without waiting for one, but he called me back and gave me this;” and he presented a little bag made of leather, round and ringing.

Athos opened it, and began by drawing from it a little note, written in these terms:

“MY DEAR COUNT: When one travels—and especially for three months—one has never enough money. Now, recalling our former time of distress, I send you the half of my purse; it is money to obtain which I made Mazarin sweat. Don’t make a bad use of it I entreat you.

“As to what you say about not seeing you again, I believe not a word of it; with your heart and your sword one might pass through everything. Au revoir, then, and not farewell.

"It is unnecessary to say that from the day I saw Raoul I loved him; nevertheless, believe that I heartily pray to God that I may not become his father, however much I might be proud of such a son.

"JONIS D'ARTAGNAN.

"P.S.—Be it well understood that the fifty louis which I send are equally for Aramis as for you, and for you as for Aramis."

Athos smiled, and his fine eye was dimmed by a tear. D'Artagnan, who had loved him so tenderly, loved him still, Mazarinist though he was.

"There are the fifty louis, i'faith," said Aramis, emptying the purse on the table, "all bearing the effigy of Louis XIII. Well, what shall you do with this money, count; shall you keep it, or send it back?"

"I shall keep it, Aramis; and even had I no need of it, I should still keep it. What is offered from a generous heart should be accepted generously. Take twenty-five of them, Aramis, and give me the remaining twenty-five."

"All right; I am glad to see that you are of my opinion. Then now shall we start?"

"When you like; but have you no groom?"

"No! that idiot Bazin had the folly to make himself verger, as you know, and therefore cannot leave Nôtre Dame."

"Very well, take Blaisois, with whom I know not what to do since I have had Grimaud."

"Willingly," said Aramis.

At this moment Grimaud appeared at the door. "Ready," said he, with his usual curtness.

"Let us go then," said Athos.

The two friends mounted, as did their servants. At the corner of the Quai they encountered Bazin, who was running breathlessly.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed he, "thank heaven I have arrived in time. Monsieur Porthos has just been to your house, and has left this for you, saying that the thing was important, and ought to be given to you before you left."

"Good," said Aramis, taking a purse which Bazin presented to him. "What is this?"

"Wait, your reverence, there is a letter."

"You know that I have already told you that if you ever call me anything but chevalier I will break your bones. Give me the letter."

"How can you read?" asked Athos; "it is as dark as in an oven."

"Wait," said Bazin, striking a light, and lighting a twisted wax-light, with which he lighted the church candles. By this light Aramis read the following epistle:

"MY DEAR D'HERBLAY: I learn from D'Artagnan, who has embraced me on the part of the Count de la Fère and yourself, that you are setting out on a journey which may perhaps last two or three months. As I know that you do not like to ask money of your friend, I offer to you. Here are two hundred pistoles, of which you can dispose, and return to me when an opportunity occurs. Do not fear that you put me to inconvenience; if I want money, I can send for some from one of my châteaux; at Bracieux alone I have twenty thousand francs in gold. So, if I do not send you more, it is because I fear you would not accept a large sum.

"I address you, because you know, that although I esteem him from my heart, I am a little awed by Count de la Fère; but it is understood, that what I offer to you I offer to him at the same time.

"I am, as I trust you do not doubt, your devoted

"DE VALON DE BRACIEUX DE PIERREFONDS."

"Well," said Aramis, "what do you say to that?"

"I say, my dear D'Herblay, that it is almost sacrilege to distrust Providence when one has such friends, and therefore we will divide the pistoles from Porthos, as we divided the louis sent by D'Artagnan."

The division being made by the light of Bazin's taper, the two friends continued their road, and a quarter of an hour later they had joined De Winter at the Porte St. Denis.

CHAPTER XLI.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT FIRST IMPULSES ARE ALWAYS BEST.

THE three gentlemen took the road to Picardy—a road so well known to them, and which recalled to Athos and Aramis some of the most picturesque adventures of their youth.

"If Mousqueton were with us," observed Athos, on reaching the spot where they had had a dispute with the papiers, "how he would tremble at passing this! Do you remember, Aramis, that it was here he received that famous ball?"

"By my faith, I would allow him to tremble," replied

Aramis; "for even I feel a shudder at the recollection; hold, just above that tree is the little spot where I thought I was killed."

It was soon time for Grimaud to recall the past. Arriving before the inn at which his master and himself had made such an enormous repast, he approached Athos, and said, showing him the air-hole of the cellar:

"Sausages!"

Athos began to laugh, and this youthful folly of his appeared to be as amusing as if some one had related it of another person.

At last, after traveling two days and one night, they arrived at Boulogne toward the evening, favored by magnificent weather. Boulogne was a strong position, and then almost a deserted town, built entirely on the heights, and what is now called the lower town did not then exist.

"Gentlemen," said De Winter, on reaching the gate of the town, "let us do here as at Paris—let us separate to avoid suspicion. I know an inn, little frequented, but of which the host is entirely devoted to me. I will go there, where I expect to find letters, and you go to the first tavern in the town, to L'Epée du Grand Henri for instance, refresh yourselves, and in two hours be upon the jetty—our boat is waiting there for us."

The matter being thus decided, the two friends found, about two hundred paces further, the tavern indicated to them. The horses were fed, but not unsaddled; the grooms up—for it was already late—and their two masters, impatient to return, appointed a place of meeting with them on the jetty, and desired them on no account to exchange a word with any one. It is needless to say that this caution concerned Blaisois alone—it was long since it had become a useless one to Grimaud.

Athos and Aramis walked down toward the port. From their dress, covered with dust, and from a certain easy manner by which a man accustomed to travel is always recognized, the two friends excited the attention of a few walkers. There was more especially one upon whom their arrival had produced a decided impression. This man, who they had observed from the first for the same reason as they had themselves been remarked by others, walked in a melancholy way up and down the jetty. From the moment he perceived them he did not cease to look at them, and seemed to burn with the wish to speak to them.

On reaching the jetty, Athos and Aramis stopped to look

at a little boat fastened to a stake, and ready rigged as if waiting to start.

"That is, doubtless, our boat," said Athos.

"Yes," replied Aramis, "and the sloop sailing about there must be that which is to take us to our destination; now," continued he, "if only De Winter does not keep us waiting. It is not at all amusing here—there is not a single woman passing."

"Hush!" said Athos, "we are overheard."

In truth, the walker who, during the observations of the two friends, had passed and repassed behind them several times, stopped at the name of De Winter; but as his face betrayed no emotion at the mention of this name, it might have been by chance that he had stopped.

"Gentlemen," said the man, who was young and pale, bowing with much ease and politeness, "pardon my curiosity, but I see you come from Paris, or at least that you are strangers at Boulogne."

"We come from Paris, yes," replied Athos, with the same courtesy; "what is there at your service?"

"Sir," said the young man, "will you be so good as to tell me if it be true that Cardinal Mazarin is no longer minister?"

"That is a strange question," said Aramis.

"He is and he is not," replied Athos; "that is to say, he is dismissed by one half of France; and that, by means of intrigues and promises, he makes the other half retain him; you will perceive that this may last a long time."

"However, sir," said the stranger, "he has neither fled, nor is in prison?"

"No, sir, not at this moment at least."

"Sirs, accept my thanks for your politeness," said the young man, retreating.

"What do you think of that interrogator?" asked Aramis.

"I think he is either a provincial person who is dull, or a spy wishing for information."

"And you replied to him with that notion?"

"Nothing warranted me to answer him otherwise: he was polite to me, and I was so to him."

"But if he be a spy——"

"What do you think a spy would be about here? We are not living in the time of Cardinal Richelieu, who would have closed the ports on a bare suspicion."

"It matters not; you were wrong to reply to him as you did," continued Aramis, following with his eyes the young man disappearing behind the cliffs.

"And you," said Athos, "you forget that you committed a very different kind of imprudence in pronouncing Lord de Winter's name. Did you not see that at that name the young man stopped?"

"More reason, then, when he spoke to you for sending him about his business."

"A quarrel?" asked Athos.

"And since when have you become afraid of a quarrel?"

"I am always afraid of a quarrel when I am expected at any place, and that such a quarrel might possibly prevent my reaching it. Besides, let me own something to you. I am anxious to see that young man nearer."

"And wherefore?"

"Aramis, you will certainly laugh at me—you will say that I am always repeating the same thing—you will call me the most timorous of visionaries; but to whom do you see a resemblance in that young man?"

"In beauty, or on the contrary?" asked Aramis, laughing.

"In ugliness, and as far as a man can resemble a woman?"

"Ah, egad!" cried Aramis, "you have made me think. No, in truth, you are no visionary, my dear friend, and now that I think of it—you—yes, i'faith, quite right—that delicate and compressed mouth, those eyes which seem always at the command of the intellect, and never of the heart! Yes, it is one of milady's bastards!"

"You laugh, Aramis."

"From habit, that is all; for I swear to you, I should like no better than yourself to meet that viper in my path."

"Ah! here is De Winter coming," said Athos.

"Good, one thing now is only wanting, and that is that our grooms should keep us waiting."

"No," said Athos, "I see them about twenty paces behind my lord. I recognize Grimaud by his long legs and stiff gait. Tony carries our muskets."

"Then we shall embark to-night?" asked Aramis, glancing toward the west, where the sun had left but one golden cloud, which, dipping into the ocean, appeared by degrees to be extinguished.

"Probably so," said Athos.

"Diable!" resumed Aramis; "I have little fancy for the sea by day, but still less at night; the sounds of the winds and waves, the frightful motion of the vessel—I confess that I prefer to be in the convent of Noisy."

Athos smiled sadly, for it was evident that he was thinking of other things as he listened to his friend, and he moved toward De Winter.

"What ails our friend?" said Aramis; "he resembles one of Dante's damned people, whose neck Satan has dislocated, and who always look at their heels. What the devil makes him look thus behind him?"

When De Winter perceived them, in his turn he advanced toward them with surprising rapidity.

"What is the matter, my lord?" said Athos; "and what puts you out of breath thus?"

"Nothing," replied De Winter, "nothing; and yet in passing the heights it seemed to me—" and he again turned round.

Athos glanced at Aramis.

"But let us go," continued De Winter; "let us be off; the boat must be waiting for us, and there is our sloop at anchor—do you see it there? I wish I were on board already"—and he looked back again.

"He has seen him," said Athos, in a low tone to Aramis.

They had now reached the ladder which led to the boat. De Winter made the grooms who carried the arms, and the porters with the luggage, descend the first, and was about to follow them.

At this moment, Athos perceived a man walking on the seashore parallel to the jetty, and hastening his steps as if to reach the other side of the port, scarcely twenty steps from the place of embarking. He fancied in the darkness that he recognized the young man who had questioned him. Athos now descended the ladder in his turn, without losing sight of the young man. The latter, to make a short cut, had appeared on a sluice.

"He certainly bodes us no good," said Athos; "but let us embark—once out at sea, let him come."

And Athos sprang into the boat, which was immediately pushed off, and which soon distanced the shore under the efforts of four strong rowers.

But the young man had begun to follow or rather to advance before the boat. She was obliged to advance between the point of the jetty, surmounted by a beacon, just lighted, and a rock which jutted out. They saw him in the distance climbing the rock, in order to look down upon the boat as she passed.

"Ay, but," said Aramis, "that young man is decidedly a spy."

"Which is the young man?" asked De Winter, turning round.

"He who followed us, and spoke to us, and awaits us there—see!"

De Winter turned, and followed the direction of Aramis' finger. The beacon bathed its light upon the little strait through which they were about to pass, and the rock where the young man stood with bare head and crossed arms.

"It is he!" exclaimed De Winter, seizing the arm of Athos; "it is he! I thought I recognized him, and I was not mistaken."

"Who—him?" asked Aramis.

"Milady's son," replied Athos.

"The monk!" exclaimed Grimaud.

The young man heard the words, and bent so forward over the rock that one might have supposed he was about to precipitate himself from it.

"Yes, it is I, my uncle. I, the son of milady—I, the monk—I, the secretary and friend of Cromwell—and I know you, both you and your companions."

There were in that boat three men, unquestionably brave, and whose courage no man would have dared to dispute; nevertheless, at that voice, that accent, and those gestures, they felt a shudder of terror run through their veins. As for Grimaud, his hair stood on end, and drops of sweat ran from his brow.

"Ah!" exclaimed Aramis, "that is the nephew, the monk and the son of milady, as he says himself."

"Alas! yes," murmured De Winter.

"Then, wait," said Aramis; and with the terrible coolness which on important occasions he showed, he took one of the muskets from Tony, shouldered and aimed it at the young man, who stood, like the accusing angel, upon the rock.

"Fire!" said Grimaud, unconsciously.

Athos threw himself on the mouth of the gun, and arrested the shot which was about to be fired.

"The devil take you," said Aramis, "I had him so well at the point of my gun, I should have sent a ball into his breast."

"It is enough to have killed the mother," said Athos hoarsely.

"The mother was a wretch, who struck at us all, and at those dear to us."

"Yes, but the son has done us no harm."

Grimaud, who had risen to watch the effect of the shot fell back hopeless, wringing his hands.

The young man burst into a laugh.

"Ah, it is certainly you," he cried, "and I know you now."

His mocking laugh and threatening words passed over their heads, carried on by the breeze, until lost in the depths of the horizon. Aramis shuddered.

"Be calm!" exclaimed Athos, "for heaven's sake—have we ceased to be men?"

"No," said Aramis, "but that being is a fiend; and ask the uncle whether I was wrong to rid him of his nephew."

De Winter only replied by a groan.

"It was all up with him," continued Aramis; "ah, I much fear that, with your wisdom, you have made me commit a great folly."

Athos took Lord de Winter's hand, and tried to turn the conversation.

"When shall we land in England?" he asked; but De Winter seemed not to hear his words, and made no reply.

"Hold, Athos," said Aramis, "perhaps there is still time. See if he is still in the same place."

Athos turned round with an effort; the sight of the young man was evidently painful to him, and there he still was, in fact, on the rock, the beacon shedding around him, as it were, a glory of light.

"Decidedly, Aramis," said Athos; "I think I was wrong not to let you fire."

"Hold your tongue," replied Aramis; "you will make me weep if it were possible."

At this moment they were hailed by a voice from the sloop, and a few seconds later, men, servants, and baggage were on deck. The captain had been only waiting his passengers, and hardly had they put foot on board ere her head was turned toward Hastings, where they were to disembark. At this instant the three friends turned, in spite of themselves, a last look on the rock, upon the menacing figure which pursued them and stood out boldly. Then a voice reached them once more, sending out this threat: "To our next meeting, sirs, in England."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE TE DEUM FOR THE VICTORY OF LENS.

THE bustle which had been observed by Henrietta Maria, and for which she had vainly sought to discover a reason, was occasioned by the battle of Lens, announced by the prince's messenger, the Duc de Châtillon, who had taken such

a noble part in the engagement; he was, besides, charged to hang twenty-five flags taken from the Lorraine party, as well as from the Spaniards, upon the arches of Nôtre Dame.

This news was decisive; it destroyed, in favor of the court, the struggle commenced with the parliament. The motive given for all the taxes summarily imposed, and to which the parliament had made opposition, was the necessity of sustaining the honor of France, and upon the uncertain hope of beating the enemy. Now, since the affair of Nordlingen, they had but experienced reverses; the parliament had a plea for calling Mazarin to account for all the victories—always promised and always deferred; but this time there had really been fighting, there had been a triumph and a complete one. And this all knew so well, that it was a double victory for the court—a victory interior and exterior, so that even when the young king learned the news, he exclaimed: "Ah, gentlemen of the parliament, we shall see what you will say now." Upon which the queen had pressed to her heart the royal child, whose haughty and unruly sentiments were in such harmony with her own. A council was called the same evening, but nothing transpired of what was decided. It was only known that on the following Sunday a "Te Deum" would be sung at Nôtre Dame in honor of the victory of Lens.

The following Sunday, then, the Parisians arose with joy; at that period a "Te Deum" was a grand affair; this kind of ceremony had not then been made an abuse of, and it produced a great effect. The shops were deserted, the houses closed; every one wished to see the young king with his mother, and the famous Cardinal Mazarin, whom they hated so much, that no one wished to be deprived of his presence. Moreover, great liberty prevailed among this immense crowd; every opinion was openly expressed, and rung out, so to speak, insurrection, as the thousand bells of all the Paris churches rang out the "Te Deum." The police belonging to the city being formed by the city itself, nothing threatening presented itself to disturb the concert of universal hatred, or to freeze words between slanderous lips.

Nevertheless, at eight o'clock in the morning, the regiment of the queen's guards, commanded by Guitant, under whom was his nephew, Comminges, marched, preceded by drums and trumpets, to file off from the Palais Royal as far as Nôtre Dame, a maneuver which the Parisians witnessed tranquilly, delighted as they were with military music and brilliant uniforms.

Friquet had put on his Sunday clothes, under the pretext

of having a cold, which he had managed to procure momentarily, by introducing an infinite number of cherry nuts into one side of his mouth, and had procured a whole holiday from Bazin. On leaving Bazin, Friquet started off to the Palais Royal, where he arrived at the moment of the turning out of the regiment of guards, and as he had only gone there for the enjoyment of seeing it and hearing the music, he took his place at their head, beating the drum on two pieces of slate, and passing from that exercise to that of the trumpet, which he counterfeited naturally with his mouth in a manner which had more than once called forth the praises of amateurs of imitative harmony.

This amusement lasted from the Barrière des Sergens to the place of Nôtre Dame; and Friquet found in it true enjoyment; but when at last the regiment separated, penetrated to the heart of the city, and placed itself at the extremity of the Rue St. Christophe, near the Rue Cocatrix, in which Broussel lived, then Friquet remembered that he had not had breakfast; and after thinking to which side he had best turn his steps in order to accomplish this important act of the day, he reflected deeply, and decided that it should be Counsellor Broussel who should bear the cost of his repast.

In consequence he took a start, arrived breathlessly at the counsellor's door, and knocked violently.

His mother, the counsellor's old servant, opened it.

"What dost thou here, good-for-nothing?" she said, "and why art thou not at Nôtre Dame?"

"I have been there, mother," said Friquet, "but I saw things happen of which Master Broussel ought to be warned, and so with Monsieur Bazin's permission—you know, mother, Monsieur Bazin, the verger?—I came to speak to Monsieur Broussel."

"And what hast thou to say, boy, to Monsieur Broussel?"

"I wish to tell him," replied Friquet, screaming with all his might, "that there is a whole regiment of guards coming this way. And, as I hear everywhere that at the court they are ill-disposed to him, I wish to warn him, that he may be on his guard."

Broussel heard the scream of the young oddity; and, enchanted with this excess of zeal, came down to the first floor, for he was, in truth, working in his room on the second.

"Well!" said he, "friend—what matters the regiment of guards to us, and art thou not mad to make such a disturbance? Knowest thou not that it is the custom of these soldiers to act thus, and that it is usual for the regiment to form themselves into a hedge where the king passes?"

Friquet counterfeited surprise—and turning his new cap round his fingers, said—

“It is not astonishing for you to know it, Monsieur Broussel, who know everything—but me, by the holy truth, I do not know it, and I thought I would give you good advice—you must not be angry with me for that, Monsieur Broussel.”

“On the contrary, my boy; on the contrary, I am pleased with your zeal. Dame Nanette, see for those apricots which Madame de Longueville sent to us yesterday from Noisy, and give half-a-dozen of them to your son, with a crust of new bread.”

“Oh, thank you, sir, thank you, Monsieur Broussel,” said Friquet; “I am so fond of apricots!”

Broussel then proceeded to his wife’s room, and asked for breakfast; it was nine o’clock. The counsellor placed himself at the window; the street was completely deserted; but in the distance was heard, like the noise of the tide rushing in, the deep hum of the populous waves which increased around Nôtre Dame.

This noise redoubled, when D’Artagnan, with a company of musketeers, placed himself at the gates of Nôtre Dame to secure the service of the church. He had told Porthos to profit by this opportunity to see the ceremony; and Porthos, in full dress, mounted his finest horse, doing the part of an honorary musketeer, as D’Artagnan had so often done formerly. The sergeant of this company, an old veteran of the Spanish wars, had recognized Porthos, his old companion, and very soon all those who served under him had been placed in possession of startling facts concerning the honor of the ancient musketeers of Tréville. Porthos had not only been well received by the company, but he was, moreover, looked upon with great admiration.

At ten o’clock the guns of the Louvre announced the departure of the king, and then a movement, similar to that of trees in a stormy wind bending and agitating their tops, ran through the multitude, which was compressed behind the immovable muskets of the guards. At last the king appeared with the queen in a gilded chariot. Ten other carriages followed, containing the ladies of honor, the officers of the royal household, and all the court.

“God save the king!” was the cry in every direction; the young monarch gravely put his head out of the window, looked sufficiently grateful, and even bowed slightly: at which the cries of the multitude were renewed.

Just as the court was being placed in the cathedral, a car-

riage, bearing the arms of Comminges, quitted the line of court carriages, and proceeded slowly to the end of the Rue St. Christophe, now entirely deserted. When it arrived there, four guards and a police officer, who accompanied it, mounted into the heavy machine, and closed the shutters; then, with a judicious admittance of the light, the policeman began to watch the length of the Rue Cocatrix, as if he was waiting for some one.

All the world was occupied with the ceremony, so that neither the chariot, nor the precautions taken by those who were within it, had been observed. Friquet, whose eye, always on the alert, could alone have discovered them, had gone to devour his apricots upon the-entablature of a house in the square of Nôtre Dame. Thence, he saw the king, the queen, and Monsieur Mazarin, and heard the mass, as well as if he had been on service.

Toward the end of the service, the queen, seeing Comminges standing near her, waiting for a confirmation of the order she had given him before quitting the Louvre, said, in a whisper:

“Go, Comminges, and may God aid you!”

Comminges immediately left the church, and entered the Rue St. Christophe. Friquet, seeing this fine officer thus walk away, followed by two guards, amused himself by pursuing them, and did thus so much the more gladly, since the ceremony ended at that instant, and the king remounted his carriage.

Hardly had the police-officer observed Comminges at the end of the Rue Cocatrix, than he said one word to the coachman, who at once put his vehicle into motion, and drove up before Broussel’s door. Comminges knocked at the door at the same moment, and Friquet was waiting behind Comminges until the door should be opened.

“What dost thou there, rascal?” asked Comminges.

“I want to go into Master Broussel’s house, captain,” replied Friquet, in that coaxing tone which the “gamins” of Paris know so well how to assume when necessary.

“And on what floor does he live?” asked Comminges.

“In the whole house,” said Friquet; “the house belongs to him; he occupies the second floor when he works, and descends to the first to take his meals; he must be at dinner now—it is noon.”

“Good,” said Comminges.

At this moment the door was opened, and having questioned the servant, the officer learned that Master Broussel was at home, and at dinner.

Broussel was seated at the table with his family, having his wife opposite to him, his two daughters by his side, and his son, Louvières, whom we have already seen when the accident happened to the counsellor—an accident from which he had quite recovered—at the bottom of the table. The worthy man, restored to perfect health, was tasting the fine fruit which Madame de Longueville had sent to him.

At the sight of the officer, Broussel was somewhat moved; but seeing him bow politely, he rose and bowed also. Still, in spite of this reciprocal politeness, the countenances of the women betrayed some uneasiness; Louvières became very pale, and waited impatiently for the officer to explain himself.

“Sir,” said Comminges, “I am the bearer of an order from the king.”

“Very well, sir,” replied Broussel; “what is this order?” And he held out his hand.

“I am commissioned to seize your person, sir,” said Comminges, in the same tone, and with the same politeness; “and if you will believe me, you had better spare yourself the trouble of reading that long letter, and follow me.”

A thunderbolt falling in the midst of these good people, so peacefully assembled there, would not have produced a more appalling effect. It was a terrible thing at that period to be imprisoned by the enmity of the king. Louvières sprang forward to take his sword, which was on a chair in a corner of the room; but a glance from the worthy Broussel, who in the midst of it all did not lose his presence of mind, checked this action of despair. Madame Broussel, separated by the width of the table from her husband, burst into tears, and the young girls clung to their father’s arms.

“Come, sir,” said Comminges, “make haste, you must obey the king.”

“Sir,” said Broussel, “I am in bad health, and cannot give myself up a prisoner in this state; I ask time.”

“It is impossible,” said Comminges; “the order is strict, and must be put into execution this instant.”

“Impossible!” said Louvières; “sir, beware of driving us to despair.”

“Impossible!” cried a shrill voice from the bottom of the room.

Comminges turned and saw Dame Nanette, her eyes flashing with anger, and a broom in her hand.

“My good Nanette, be quiet, I beseech you,” said Broussel.

"Me! keep quiet while my master is arrested; he, the support—the liberator—the father of the poor people! Ah! well, yes—you have to know me yet. Are you going?" added she to Comminges.

The latter smiled.

"Come, sir," said he, addressing Broussel, "silence that woman, and follow me."

"Silence me!—me! me!" said Nanette. "Ah! yet one wants some beside you for that, my fine king's-bird. You shall see." And Dame Nanette sprang to the window, threw it open, and in such a piercing voice that it might have been heard in the square of Nôtre Dame:

"Help!" she screamed, "my master is being arrested! the Counsellor Broussel is arrested—help!"

"Sir," said Comminges, "declare yourself at once; will you obey, or do you intend to rebel against the king?"

"I obey—I obey, sir," cried Broussel, trying to disengage himself from the grasp of his two daughters, and to restrain, by his look, his son, always ready to escape from it.

"In that case," said Comminges, "silence that old woman."

"Ah! old woman!" screamed Nanette.

And she began to shriek loudly, clinging to the bars of the window.

"Help! help! for Master Broussel, who is arrested because he has defended the people—help!"

Comminges seized the servant round the waist, and would have dragged her from her post; but at that instant a treble voice, proceeding from a kind of "entresol," was heard screeching:

"Murder! fire! assassins! Master Broussel is being killed—Master Broussel is being strangled."

It was Friquet's voice; and Dame Nanette, feeling herself supported, recommenced with all her strength to make a chorus.

Many curious faces had already appeared at the windows, and the people, attracted to the end of the street, began to run—first, men, then groups, and then a crowd of people; hearing cries, and seeing a chariot, they could not understand it; but Friquet sprang from the entresol on to the top of the carriage.

"They want to arrest Master Broussel," he cried; "the guards are in the carriage, and the officer is upstairs!"

The crowd began to murmur, and approached the houses. The two guards who had remained in the lane mounted to the

aid of Comminges; those who were in the chariot opened the doors and presented arms.

"Don't you see them?" cried Friquet, "don't you see? there they are!"

The coachman turned round, and gave Friquet a cut with his whip, which made him scream with pain.

"Ah! devil's coachman!" cried Friquet, "you're meddling too; wait!"

And regaining his "entresol," he overwhelmed the coachman with every projectile he could lay hands on.

The tumult now began to increase; the street was not able to contain the spectators, who assembled from every direction; the crowd invaded the space which the dreaded pikes of the guards kept clear, between them and the carriage. The soldiers, pushed back by these living walls, were about to be crushed against the nuts of the wheels and the panels of the carriage. The cries which the police-officer repeated twenty times, of "In the king's name," were powerless against the formidable multitude, and seemed on the contrary to exasperate it still more; when, at the cries, "In the name of the king," an officer ran up, and seeing the uniforms much ill-treated, he sprang into the scuffle, sword in hand, and brought unexpected help to the guards. This gentleman was a young man, scarcely sixteen years of age, perfectly pale with anger. He sprang on foot, as the other guards, placed his back against the shaft of the carriage, making a rampart of his horse, drew his pistols from their holsters, and fastened them to his belt, and began to fight with the back sword, like a man accustomed to the handling of his weapon.

During ten minutes he alone kept the crowd at bay; at last Comminges appeared, pushing Broussel before him.

"Let us break the carriage!" cried the people.

"In the king's name!" cried Comminges.

"The first who advances is a dead man!" cried Raoul, for it was in fact he, who, feeling himself pressed and almost crushed by a kind of giant, pricked him with the point of his sword, and sent him groaning back.

Comminges, so to speak, threw Broussel into the carriage, and sprang in after him. At this moment a shot was fired, and a ball passed through the hat of Comminges, and broke the arm of one of the guards. Comminges looked up, and saw among the smoke the threatening face of Louvières, appearing at the window of the second floor.

"Very well, sir," said Comminges, "you shall hear of me again."

“And you of me, too, sir,” said Louvières; “and we shall see who can speak the loudest.”

Friquet and Nanette continued to shout; the cries, the noise of the shot, and the intoxicating smell of powder, produced their effect.

“Down with the officer! down with him!” was the cry.

“One step nearer,” said Comminges, putting down the sashes that the interior of the carriage might be well seen, and placing his sword on his prisoner’s breast, “one step nearer, and I kill the prisoner; my orders were to bring him off alive or dead. I will take him dead, that’s all.”

A terrible cry was heard, and the wife and daughters of Broussel held up their hands in supplication to the people; the latter knew that this officer, who was so pale, but who appeared so determined, would keep his word; they continued to threaten, but they began to disperse.

“Drive to the palace,” said Comminges to the coachman, more dead than alive.

The man whipped his animals, which cleared a way through the crowd; but on arriving on the Quai, they were obliged to stop; the carriage was upset, the horses were carried off, stifled, mangled by the crowd. Raoul, on foot, for he had not had time to mount his horse again, tired, like the guards, of distributing blows with the flat of his sword, had recourse to its point. But this last and dreaded resource served only to exasperate the multitude. From time to time a shot from a musket, or the blade of a rapier, flashed among the crowd; the projectiles continued to rain from the windows, and some shots were heard, the echo of which, though they were probably fired in the air, made all hearts vibrate. Voices, which are heard but on days of revolution, were distinguished; faces were seen that only appeared on days of bloodshed. Cries of “Death!—death to the guards!—to the Seine with the officer!” were heard above all the noise, deafening as it was. Raoul, his hat ground to powder, and his face bleeding, felt not only his strength, but also his reason going; a red mist covered his sight, and through this mist he saw a hundred threatening arms stretched over him, ready to seize upon him when he fell. The guards were unable to help any one—for each was occupied with his personal preservation. All was over; carriages, horses, guards, and perhaps even the prisoner, were about to be torn to shreds, when all at once a voice well known to Raoul was heard, and suddenly a large sword glistered in the air; at the same time the crowd opened—upset, trodden down—and an officer of the musketeers, striking and

cutting right and left, rushed up to Raoul, and took him in his arms, just as he was about to fall.

"God's-blood," cried the officer, "have they killed him? Woe to them if it be so."

And he turned round, so stern with anger, strength, and threat, that the most excited rebels hustled back against one another in order to escape, and some of them even rolled into the Seine.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" murmured Raoul.

"Yes, s'death, in person, and fortunately it seems for you, my young friend. Come on—here—you others," he continued, rising in his stirrups and raising his sword, and addressing those musketeers who had not been able to follow his rapid pace, "come, sweep away all that for me—shoulder muskets—present arms—aim——"

At this command the mountains of populace thinned so suddenly that D'Artagnan could not repress a burst of Homeric laughter.

"Thank you, D'Artagnan," said Comminges, showing half of his body through the window of the broken vehicle, "thanks, my young friend; your name?—that I may mention it to the queen."

Raoul was about to reply, when D'Artagnan bent down to his ear.

"Hold your tongue," said he, "and let me answer. Do not lose time, Comminges," he continued; "get out of the carriage, if you can, and make another draw up; be quick, or in five minutes all the mob will be back with swords and muskets, you will be killed, and your prisoner freed. Hold—there is a carriage coming down there."

Then, bending again to Raoul, he whispered: "Above all things, don't tell your name."

"That's right. I will go," said Comminges; "and if they come back, fire!"

"Not at all—not at all." replied D'Artagnan; "let no one move. On the contrary, one shot at this moment would be paid for dearly to-morrow."

Comminges took his four guards and as many musketeers, and ran to the carriage, from which he made the people inside dismount, and brought them to the vehicle which had upset. But when it was necessary to convey the prisoner from one carriage to the other, the people, catching sight of him whom they called their liberator, uttered every imaginable cry, and knotted once more against the vehicle.

"Start off!" said D'Artagnan. "There are ten men to

accompany you. I will keep twenty to hold in the mob; go, and lose not a moment. Ten men for Monsieur de Comminges!"

As the carriage started off the cries were redoubled, and more than ten thousand were hurried on the Quai, and encumbered the Pont Neuf and the adjacent streets. A few shots were fired, and a musketeer wounded.

"Forward!" cried D'Artagnan, driven to extremities, biting his mustache; and then he charged with his twenty men, and dispersed them in fear. One man alone remained in his place, gun in hand.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "it is thou who wouldst have him assassinated?—wait an instant." And he pointed his gun at D'Artagnan, who was riding toward him at full speed. D'Artagnan bent down to his horse's neck, the young man fired, and the ball severed the feather from the hat. The horse, startled, brushed against the imprudent man, who thought by his strength alone to stay the tempest, and he fell against the wall. D'Artagnan pulled up his horse, and while his musketeers continued to charge, he returned, and bent with drawn sword over the man whom he had knocked down.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Raoul, recognizing the young man as having seen him in the Rue Cocatrix—"spare him—it is his son!"

D'Artagnan's arm dropped to his side. "Ah, you are his son!" he said—"that is a different thing."

"Sir, I surrender," said Louvières, presenting his unloaded gun to the officer.

"Eh, no; do not surrender, egad! On the contrary, be off, and quickly. If I take you, you will be hung."

The young man waited not to be told twice; but, passing under the horse's head, disappeared at the corner of the Rue Guénégaud.

"I'faith!" said D'Artagnan to Raoul, "you were just in time to stay my hand. He was a dead man: and, by my faith, if I had discovered that it was his son, I should have regretted having killed him."

"Ah! sir," said Raoul, "allow me, after thanking you for that poor fellow, to thank you on my own account. I too, sir, was almost dead when you arrived."

"Wait—wait, young man, and do not fatigue yourself with speaking. We can talk of it afterward."

Then, seeing that the musketeers had cleared the Quai from the Pont Neuf to the Quai St. Michael, and that they were returned, he raised his sword for them to double their

speed. The musketeers trotted up, and at the same time the ten men whom D'Artagnan had given to Comminges appeared.

"Holloa!" cried D'Artagnan; "has something fresh happened?"

"Eh, sir!" replied the sergeant, "their vehicle has broken down a second time—it is really doomed."

"They are bad managers," said D'Artagnan, shrugging his shoulders. "When a carriage is chosen, it ought to be strong. The carriage in which a Broussel is to be arrested ought to be able to bear ten thousand men."

"What are your commands, my lieutenant?"

"Take the detachment, and conduct him to his place."

"But you will be left alone?"

"Certainly. Do you suppose I have need of an escort? Go."

The musketeers set off, and D'Artagnan was left alone with Raoul.

"Now," he said, "are you in pain?"

"Yes, my head is heavy and burning."

"What's the matter with this head?" said D'Artagnan, raising the battered hat. "Ah! ah! a bruise."

"Yes, I think I received a flower-pot upon my head."

"Brutes!" said D'Artagnan. "But were you not on horse-back?—you have spurs."

"Yes, but I got down to defend Monsieur de Comminges, and my horse was taken away. Here it is, I see."

At this very moment Friquet passed, mounted on Raoul's horse, waving his parti-colored cap, and crying, "Broussel! Broussel!"

"Holloa! stop, rascal!" cried D'Artagnan. "Bring hither that horse."

Friquet heard perfectly, but he pretended not to do so, and tried to continue his road. D'Artagnan felt inclined for an instant to pursue Master Friquet, but not wishing to leave Raoul alone, he contented himself with taking a pistol from the holster, and cocking it.

Friquet had a quick eye and a fine ear. He saw D'Artagnan's movement; heard the sound of the click, and stopped at once.

"Ah! it is you, your honor," he said, advancing toward D'Artagnan; "and I am truly pleased to meet you."

D'Artagnan looked attentively at Friquet, and recognized the little boy of the Rue de la Calandre.

"Ah, 'tis thou, rascal!" said he, "come here. So thou

hast changed thy trade; thou art no longer a choir-boy, or a tavern-boy; thou art then become a horse-stealer?"

"Ah, your honor, how can you say so!" exclaimed Friquet. "I was seeking the gentleman to whom this horse belongs—an officer, brave and handsome as a Cæsar"—then, pretending to see Raoul for the first time—

"Ah! but if I mistake not," continued he, "here he is; you won't forget the boy, sir?"

Raoul put his hand in his pocket.

"What are you about?" asked D'Artagnan.

"To give ten francs to this honest fellow," replied Raoul, taking a pistole from his pocket.

"Ten kicks on his back!" said D'Artagnan; "be off, you little rascal, and forget not that I have your address."

Friquet, who did not expect to be let off so cheaply, made but one bound to the Quai à la Rue Dauphine, and disappeared. Raoul mounted his horse, and both leisurely took their way to the Rue Tiquetonne.

D'Artagnan protected the youth as if he were his own son.

They arrived without accident at the Hotel de la Chevrette.

The handsome Madeleine announced to D'Artagnan that Planchet had returned, bringing Mousqueton with him, who had heroically borne the extraction of the ball, and was as well as his state would permit.

D'Artagnan desired Planchet to be summoned, but he had disappeared.

"Then bring some wine," said D'Artagnan. "You are much pleased with yourself?" said he to Raoul, when they were alone, "are you not?"

"Well, yes," replied Raoul; "it seems to me that I did my duty. I defended the king."

"And who told you to defend the king?"

"The Count de la Fère himself!"

"Yes, the king; but to-day you have not fought for the king, you have fought for Mazarin; it is not the same thing."

"But you yourself?"

"Oh, for me; it is another matter. I obey my captain's orders. As for you, your captain is the prince. Understand that rightly; you have no other. But has one ever seen such a wild fellow," continued he, "making himself a Mazarinist, and helping to arrest Broussel! Breathe not a word of that, or the Count de la Fère will be furious."

"You think that the count will be angry with me?"

"Do I think it?—I am sure of it; were it not for that, I should thank you, for you have worked for us. However, I

scold you instead of him, and in his place; the storm will blow over more easily, believe me. And, moreover, my dear child," continued D'Artagnan, "I am making use of the privilege conceded to me by your guardian."

"I do not understand you, sir," said Raoul.

D'Artagnan rose, and taking a letter from his writing-desk presented it to Raoul. The face of the latter became serious when he had cast his eyes on the paper.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* he said, raising his fine eyes to D'Artagnan, moist with tears, "the count has then left Paris without seeing me?"

"He left four days ago," said D'Artagnan.

"But his letter seems to intimate that he is about to incur danger, perhaps of death."

"He—he—incur danger of death!—no—be not anxious; he is traveling on business, and will return ere long. I hope you have no repugnance to accept me as a guardian in the interim?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur D'Artagnan," said Raoul, "you are such a brave gentleman, and the Count de la Fère has so much affection for you!"

"Eh, egad! love me too: I will not torment you much, but only on condition that you become a Frondist, my young friend, and a hearty Frondist, too."

"Well, sir, I will obey you, although I do not understand you."

"It is unnecessary for you to understand; hold," continued D'Artagnan, turning toward the door, which had just opened, "here is Monsieur de Valon, who comes with his coat torn."

"Yes, but in exchange," said Porthos, covered with perspiration, and soiled in dust—"in exchange, I have torn many skins. Those wretches wanted to take away my sword. Deuce take 'em, what a popular commotion!" continued the giant, in his quiet manner; "but I knocked down more than twenty with the hilt of Balizarde—a drop of wine, D'Artagnan."

"Oh, I'll answer for you," said the Gascon, filling Porthos' glass to the brim, "but, when you have drunk, give me your opinion."

"Upon what?" asked Porthos.

"Look here," resumed D'Artagnan; "here is Monsieur de Bragelonne, who determined, at all risks, to aid the arrest of Broussel, and whom I had great difficulty to prevent defending Monsieur de Comminges."

"The devil!" said Porthos; "and the guardian, what would he have said to that?"

"Do you hear?" interrupted D'Artagnan; "be a Frondist, my friend, belong to the Fronde, and remember that I fill the count's place in everything;" and he jingled his money.

"Will you come?" said he to Porthos.

"Where to?" asked Porthos, filling a second glass of wine.

"To present our respects to the cardinal."

Porthos swallowed the second glass with the same ease with which he had drunk the first, took his beaver, and followed D'Artagnan. As for Raoul, he remained bewildered with what he had seen, having been forbidden by D'Artagnan to leave the room until the tumult was over.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BEGGAR OF ST. EUSTACHE.

D'ARTAGNAN had calculated that in not going at once to the Palais Royal he would give time to Comminges to arrive there before him, and consequently to make the cardinal acquainted with the eminent services which he—D'Artagnan and his friend—had rendered to the queen's party in the morning.

They were indeed admirably received by Mazarin, who paid them numerous compliments, and announced that they were more than half on their way to obtain what they desired, namely, D'Artagnan his captaincy, and Porthos his barony.

While the two friends were with the cardinal, the queen sent for him. Mazarin, thinking that it would be the means of increasing the zeal of his two defenders if he procured them personal thanks from the queen, motioned to them to follow him. D'Artagnan and Porthos pointed to their dusty and torn dresses, but the cardinal shook his head.

"Those costumes," he said, "are of more worth than most of those which you will see on the queen's courtiers; they are the costumes of battle."

D'Artagnan and Porthos obeyed. The court of Anne of Austria was full of gayety and animation; for after having gained a victory over the Spaniard, it had just gained another over the people. Broussel had been conducted out of Paris without resistance, and was at this time in the prison of St. Germain; and Blancmesnil, who was arrested at the same time, but whose arrest had been made without difficulty or noise, was safe in the castle of Vincennes.

Comminges was near the queen, who was questioning him upon the details of his expedition, and every one was listening to his account when D'Artagnan and Porthos were perceived at the door behind the cardinal.

"Hey, madame," said Comminges, hastening to D'Artagnan, "here is one who can tell you better than myself, for he is my protector. Without him I should probably, at this moment, be caught in the nets at St. Cloud, for it was a question of nothing less than throwing me into the river. Speak, D'Artagnan, speak."

D'Artagnan had been a hundred times in the same room with the queen since he had become lieutenant of the musketeers, but her majesty had never once spoken to him.

"Well, sir," at last said Anne of Austria, "you are silent, after rendering such a service?"

"Madame," replied D'Artagnan, "I have nought to say, save that my life is ever at your majesty's service; and that I shall only be happy the day that I lose it for you."

"I know that, sir; I have known that," said the queen, "a long time; therefore I am delighted to be able thus publicly to mark my gratitude and my esteem."

"Permit me, madame," said D'Artagnan, "to reserve a portion for my friend; like myself" (he laid an emphasis on these words) "an ancient musketeer of the company of Tréville, and he has done wonders."

"His name?" asked the queen.

"In the regiment," said D'Artagnan, "he is called Porthos" (the queen started), "but his true name is the Chevalier de Valon."

"De Bracieux de Pierrefonds," added Porthos.

"These names are too numerous for me to remember them all, and I will content myself with the first," said the queen graciously. Porthos bowed. At this moment the coadjutor was announced; a cry of surprise ran through the royal assemblage. Although the coadjutor had preached that same morning, it was well known that he leaned much to the side of the Fronde; and Mazarin, in requesting the archbishop of Paris to make his nephew preach, had evidently had the intention of administering to Monsieur de Retz one of those Italian kicks which he so much enjoyed giving.

The fact was, in leaving Nôtre Dame the coadjutor had learned the event of the day. Although almost engaged to the leaders of the Fronde, he had not gone so far but that retreat was possible, should the court offer him the advantages for which he was ambitious, and to which the coadjutor-

ship was but a stepping-stone. Monsieur de Retz wished to be archbishop in his uncle's place, and cardinal, like Mazarin; and the popular party could with difficulty accord to him favors so entirely royal. He, therefore, hastened to the palace to congratulate the queen on the battle of Lens, determined beforehand to act with or against the court, according as his congratulations were well or ill received.

The coadjutor had, perhaps, in his own person, as much wit as all those together who were assembled at the court to laugh at him. His speech, therefore, was so well turned, that in spite of the great wish felt by the courtiers to laugh, they could find no point upon which to vent their ridicule. He concluded by saying that he placed his feeble influence at her majesty's command.

During the whole time that he was speaking the queen appeared to be well pleased with the coadjutor's harangue; but terminating as it did with such a phrase, the only one which could be caught at by the jokers, Anne turned round and directed a glance toward her favorites, which announced that she delivered up the coadjutor to their tender mercies. Immediately the wits of the court plunged into satire. Nogent-Beautin, the fool of the court, exclaimed that "the queen was very happy to have the succor of religion at such a moment." This caused a universal burst of laughter. The Count de Villeroy said "that he did not know how any fear could be entertained for a moment when the court had, to defend itself against the parliament and the citizens of Paris, his holiness, the coadjutor, who by a signal could raise an army of curates, church porters and vergers," and so on.

During this storm, Gondy, who had it in his power to make it fatal to the jesters, remained calm and stern. The queen at last asked him if he had anything to add to the fine discourse which he had just made to her.

"Yes, madame," replied the coadjutor; "I have to beg you to reflect twice ere you cause a civil war in the kingdom."

The queen turned her back, and the laughs recommenced.

The coadjutor bowed and left the palace, casting upon the cardinal such a glance as is understood best between mortal foes.

"Oh!" muttered Gondy, as he left the threshold of the palace—"ungrateful court! faithless court! cowardly court. I will teach you how to laugh to-morrow—but in another manner."

But while they were indulging in extravagant joy at the

Palais Royal, to increase the hilarity of the queen, Mazarin, a man of sense, and whose fear, moreover, gave him foresight, lost no time in making idle and dangerous jokes; he went out after the coadjutor, settled his account, locked up his gold, and had confidential workmen to contrive hiding-places in his walls.

On his return home the coadjutor was informed that a young man had come in after his departure, and was waiting for him; he started with delight when, on demanding the name of this young man, he learned that it was Louvières.

He immediately went to his room, and advancing toward him, held out his hand. The young man gazed at him as if he would have read the secret of his heart.

"My dear Monsieur Louvières," said the coadjutor, "believe how truly concerned I am for the misfortune which has happened to you."

"Is that true, and do you speak seriously?" asked Louvières.

"From the depth of my heart," said Gondy.

"In that case, my lord, the time for words has passed, and the hour for action is come. My lord, in three days, if you wish it, my father will be out of prison, and in six months you may be cardinal."

The coadjutor started.

"Oh! let us speak frankly," continued Louvières, "and act in a straightforward manner. Thirty thousand crowns in alms is not given—as you have done for the last six months—out of pure Christian charity; that would be too grand. You are ambitious, it is natural; you are a man of genius, and you know your worth. As for me, I hate the court, and have but one desire at this moment—it is for vengeance. Give us the clergy and the people, of whom you can dispose, and I will bring you the citizens and the parliament: with these four elements Paris is ours in a week; and believe me, Monsieur Coadjutor, the court will give from fear what she will not give from good will."

It was now the coadjutor's turn to fix his piercing glance on Louvières.

"But, Monsieur Louvières, are you aware that it is simply civil war that you propose to me?"

"You have been preparing it long enough, my lord, for it to be welcome to you now."

"Never mind," said the coadjutor; "you must know that this requires reflection."

"And how many hours of reflection do you ask?"

"Twelve hours, sir; is it too long?"

"It is now noon: at midnight I will be at your house."

"If I am not come in, wait for me."

"Good! at midnight, my lord."

"At midnight, my dear Monsieur Louvières."

When once more alone, Gondy sent to summon all the curates with whom he had any connection, to his house. Two hours later, thirty officiating ministers from the most populous, and consequently the most disturbed, parishes of Paris, had assembled together there. Gondy related to them the insults he had received at the Palais Royal, and retailed the jests of Beautin, Count de Villeroy, and the Maréchal de la Meilleraie. The curates demanded what was to be done.

"Simply this," said the coadjutor; "you are the directors of consciences. Well, undermine in them the miserable prejudice of respect and fear of kings—teach to your flocks that the queen is a tyrant; and repeat, often and loudly, so that all may know it, that the misfortunes of France are caused by Mazarin, her lover and her destroyer; begin this work to-day, this instant even, and in three days I shall expect the result. For the rest, if any one of you have good counsel to give me, I shall listen to him with pleasure."

Three curates remained: those of St. Merri, St. Sulpice, and St. Eustache.

"You think, then, that you can help me more efficaciously than your brothers?" said Gondy.

"We hope so," answered the curates.

"Let us hear. Monsieur de St. Merri, you begin."

"My lord, I have in my parish a man who might be of the greatest use to you."

"What is this man?"

"A shopkeeper in the Rue des Lombards, who has great influence upon the little commerce of his quarter."

"What is his name?"

"He is named Planchet, who himself also caused an *émeute* about six weeks ago; but as he was searched for after this *émeute*, he disappeared."

"And could you find him?"

"I hope so. I think he has not been arrested, and as I am his wife's confessor, if she knows where he is, I shall know it too."

"Very well, sir; find this man, and when you have found him, bring him to me."

"We will be with you at six o'clock, my lord."

"Go, my dear curate, and may God aid you!"

"And you, sir," continued Gondy, turning to the curate of St. Sulpice.

"I, my lord," said the latter, "I know a man who has rendered great services to a very popular prince, and who would make an excellent leader of a revolt, and whom I can put at your disposal; it is Count de Rochefort."

"I know him also, but unfortunately he is not in Paris."

"My lord, he has been for three days at the Rue Cassette."

"And wherefore has he not been to see me?"

"He was told—my lord will pardon me——?"

"Certainly; speak."

"That your lordship was about to treat with the court."

Gondy bit his lips.

"They are mistaken; bring him here at eight o'clock, sir, and may heaven bless you as I bless you!"

"And now 'tis your turn," said the coadjutor, turning to the last that remained, "have you anything so good to offer me as the two gentlemen who have left us?"

"Better, my lord."

"*Diable!* think what a solemn engagement you are making there; one has offered a shopkeeper, the other a count; you are going, then, to offer a prince, are you?"

"I offer you a beggar, my lord."

"Ah! ah!" said Gondy, reflecting, "you are right, sir; some one who could raise the legion of paupers who choke up the crossings of Paris, some one who would know how to cry aloud to them, that all France might hear it, that it is Mazarin who has reduced them to the wallet——"

"Exactly your man."

"Bravo! and what is the man?"

"A simple beggar, as I have said, my lord, who asks for alms, as he gives holy water, a practice he has carried on for about six years on the steps of the Church of St. Eustache."

"And you say that he has a great influence over his compeers?"

"Are you aware, my lord, that mendicity is an organized body, a kind of association of those who have not, against those who have—an association in which every one takes his share, and which elects a leader."

"Yes, I have heard that said," replied the coadjutor.

"Well, the man whom I offer to you is a universal authority."

"And what do you know of this man?"

"Nothing, my lord, except that he is tormented with remorse."

"What makes you think so?"

"On the twenty-eighth of every month he makes me say a mass for the repose of the soul of a person who died a violent death; yesterday I said this mass again."

"And his name?"

"Maillard; but I do not think it is his true name."

"And think you that we should find him at this hour at his post?"

"Certainly."

"Let us go and see your beggar, sir, and if he is such as you describe him, you are right—it will be you who have found the true treasure."

Gondy dressed himself as an officer, put on a felt cap with a red feather, hung on a long sword, buckled spurs to his boots, wrapped himself in an ample cloak, and followed the curate.

On arriving at the Rue des Prouvaires, the curate pointed toward the square before the church.

"Stop!" he said, "there he is at his post."

Gondy looked at the spot indicated, and perceived a beggar seated in a chair, and leaning against one of the moldings; a little basin was near him, and he held a holy-water brush in his hand.

"Is it by permission that he remains there?" asked Gondy.

"No, my lord; these places are bought; I think that this man paid his predecessor a hundred pistoles for his."

"The rascal is rich, then?"

"Some of these men sometimes die worth twenty thousand, and twenty-five, and thirty thousand francs, and sometimes more."

"Hum!" said Gondy, laughing; "I was not aware that my alms were so well invested."

In the meantime they were advancing toward the square, and the moment the coadjutor and the curate put their feet on the first church step, the mendicant rose and proffered his brush.

He was a man between sixty-six and sixty-eight years of age, little, rather stout, with gray hair, and light eyes. His countenance denoted the struggle between two opposite principles—a wicked nature subdued by determination, perhaps by repentance.

He started on seeing the cavalier with the curate. The latter and the coadjutor touched the brush with the tips of their fingers, made the sign of the cross; the coadjutor threw a piece of money into the hat, which was on the ground.

"Maillard," began the curate, "this gentleman and I have come to talk with you a little."

"With me!" said the mendicant; "it is a great honor for a poor giver of holy water."

There was an ironical tone in his voice, which he could not quite prevent, and which astonished the coadjutor.

"Yes," continued the curate, apparently accustomed to his tone, "yes, we wish to know your opinion of the events of to-day, and what you have heard said by people going in and out of the church."

The mendicant shook his head.

"These are melancholy doings, your reverence, which always fall again upon the poor people. As to what is said, everybody is discontented—everybody complains—but——"

"Explain yourself, my good friend," said the coadjutor.

"I mean that all these cries, all these complaints, these curses, produce nothing but storms and flashes, and that is all; but the lightning will not strike until there is a hand to guide it."

"My friend," said Gondy, "you seem to be a clever man; are you disposed to take a part in a little civil war, should we have one, and put at the command of the leader—should we find one—your personal influence, and the influence you have acquired over your comrades?"

"Yes, sir, provided this war was approved by the church, and would advance the end I wish to attain—I mean the remission of my sins."

"This war will not only be approved of, but directed by the church. As for the remission of your sins, we have the archbishop of Paris, who has great power at the court of Rome, and even the coadjutor, who possesses some particular indulgences—we will recommend you to him. And do you think your power as great with your fraternity as Monsieur le Curé told me it was just now?"

"I think they have some esteem for me," said the mendicant, with pride, "and not only they will obey me, but that, wherever I go, they will follow me."

"And could you count upon fifty resolute men, good, unemployed, but active souls, brawlers capable of bringing down the walls of the Palais Royale by crying 'Down with Mazarin,' as fell all those at Jericho?"

"I think," said the beggar, "that I can undertake things more difficult, and more important than that."

"Ah, ah," said Gondy, "you will undertake, then, some night, to throw up some ten barricades."

"I will undertake to throw up fifty, and when the day comes to defend them."

"I'faith!" exclaimed Gondy, "you speak with a certainty that gives me pleasure; and since Monsieur le Curé can answer for you——"

"I answer for him," said the curate.

"Here is a bag containing five hundred pistoles in gold—make all your arrangements, and tell me where I shall be able to find you this evening at ten o'clock."

"It must be on some elevated place, whence a given signal may be seen in every quarter of Paris."

"Shall I give you a line for the Vicar of St. Jaques-de-la-Boucherie? he will let you into the rooms in his tower," said the curate.

"Capital," answered the mendicant.

"Then," said the coadjutor, "this evening at ten o'clock; and if I am pleased with you, another bag of five hundred pistoles will be at your disposal."

The eyes of the mendicant flashed with cupidity, but he suppressed this emotion.

"This evening, sir," he replied, "all will be ready."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE TOWER OF ST. JACQUES-DE-LA-BOUCHERIE.

At a quarter to six o'clock, Monsieur de Gondy, having finished all his business, returned to the archiepiscopal palace.

At six o'clock the curate of St. Merri was announced.

The coadjutor glanced rapidly behind, and saw that he was followed by another man. The curate then entered, followed by Planchet.

"Your holiness," said the curate, "here is the person of whom I had the honor to speak to you."

"And you are disposed to serve the cause of the people?" asked Gondy.

"Most undoubtedly," said Planchet. "I am a Frondist from my heart. You see in me, such as I am, my lord, a person sentenced to be hung."

"And on what account?"

"I rescued from the hands of Mazarin's police a noble lord, whom they were conducting again to the Bastille, where he had been for five years."

"Will you name him?"

"Oh, you know him well, my lord—it is Count de Rochefort."

"Ah! really, yes," said the coadjutor, "I have heard this affair mentioned. You raised the whole district, they told me?"

"Very nearly," replied Planchet, with a self-satisfied air.

"And your business is——"

"That of a confectioner, in the Rue des Lombards."

"Explain to me how it happens that, following so peaceful a business, you had such warlike inclinations."

"Why does my lord, belonging to the church, now receive me in the dress of an officer with a sword at his side, and spurs to his boots?"

"Not badly answered, i'faith," said Gondy, laughing; "but I have, you must know, always had, in spite of my bands, warlike inclinations."

"Well, my lord, before I became a confectioner, I myself was three years sergeant in the Piedmontese regiment, and before I became sergeant I was for eighteen months the servant of Monsieur D'Artagnan."

"The lieutenant of the musketeers?" asked Gondy.

"Himself, my lord."

"But he is said to be a furious Mazarinist."

"Hew!" said Planchet.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing, my lord; Monsieur D'Artagnan belongs to the service; Monsieur D'Artagnan makes it his business to defend the cardinal, who pays him, as much as we make it ours—we citizens—to attack him, whom he robs."

"You are an intelligent fellow, my friend; can we count upon you?"

"You may count upon me, my lord, provided you want to make a total overturning in the city."

"'Tis that exactly. How many men, think you, you could collect together to-night?"

"Two hundred muskets, and five hundred halberds."

"Let there be only one man in every district who can do as much, and by to-morrow we shall have a tolerably strong army. Are you disposed to obey Count de Rochefort?"

"I would follow him to hell; and that is not saying a little, as I believe him quite capable of descending there."

"Bravo!"

"By what sign to-morrow shall we be able to distinguish friends from foes?"

"Every Frondist must put a knot of straw in his hat."

"Good! Give the watchword."

"Do you want money?"

"Money never comes amiss at any time, my lord; if one has it not, one must do without it; with it matters go on much better, and more rapidly."

Gondy went to a box and drew forth a bag.

"Here are five hundred pistoles," he said; "and if the action goes off well you may reckon upon a similar sum to-morrow."

"I will give a faithful account of the sum to your lordship," said Planchet, putting the bag under his arm.

"That is right: I recommend the cardinal to your attention."

"Make your mind easy, he is in good hands."

Planchet went out, and ten minutes later the curate of St. Sulpice was announced. As soon as the door of Gondy's study was opened, a man rushed in; it was Count de Rochefort.

"It is you, then, my dear count," cried Gondy, offering his hand.

"You are decided at last, my lord?" said Rochefort.

"I have ever been so," said Gondy.

"Let us speak no more on that subject: you tell me so—I believe you. Well, we are going to give a ball to Mazarin."

"I hope so."

"And when will the dance begin?"

"The invitations are given for this evening," said the coadjutor, "but the violins will only begin to play to-morrow morning."

"You may reckon upon me, and upon fifty soldiers which the Chevalier d'Humières has promised to me, whenever I might need them."

"Upon fifty soldiers?"

"Yes, he is making recruits, and he will lend them to me; if any are missing when the fête is over, I shall replace them."

"Good, my dear Rochefort; but that is not all. What have you done with Monsieur de Beaufort?"

"He is in Vendôme, where he waits until I write to him to return to Paris."

"Write to him—now's the time."

"You are sure of your enterprise?"

"Yes, but he must hurry himself; for hardly shall the people of Paris have revolted, than we shall have ten princes to one, wishing to be at their head: if he defers, he will find the place taken."

"And you will leave all command to him?"

"For the war, yes; but in politics——"

"You know it is not his element."

"He must leave me to negotiate for my cardinal's hat in my own fashion."

"You care about it so much?"

"Since they force me to wear a hat of a form which does not become me," said Gondy, "I wish at least that the hat should be red."

"One must not dispute taste and colors," said Rochefort, laughing. "I answer for his consent."

"How soon can he be here?"

"In five days."

"Let him come, and he will find a change, I will answer for it. Therefore, go and collect your fifty men, and hold yourself in readiness."

"For what?"

"For everything."

"Is there any signal for rallying?"

"A knot of straw in the hat?"

"Very good. Adieu, my lord."

"Adieu, my dear Rochefort."

"Ah! Monsieur Mazarin, Monsieur Mazarin," said Rochefort, leading off his curate, who had not found an opportunity of uttering a single word during the foregoing dialogue, "you will see whether I am too old to be a man of action."

It was half-past nine o'clock, and the coadjutor required half an hour to go from the archbishop's palace to the tower of St. Jaques-de-la-Boucherie. He remarked that a light burned in one of the highest windows of the tower. "Good," said he, "our syndic is at his post."

He knocked, and the door was opened. The vicar himself awaited him, conducted him to the top of the tower, and when there pointed to a little door, placed the light which he had brought with him in the corner of the wall, that the coadjutor might be able to find it on his return, and went down again. Although the key was in the door, the coadjutor knocked.

"Come in," said a voice which he recognized as that of the mendicant, whom he found lying on a kind of truckle bed. He rose on the entrance of the coadjutor, and at that moment ten o'clock struck.

"Well," said Gondy, "have you kept your word with me?"

"Not quite," replied the mendicant.

"How is that?"

"You asked me for five hundred men, did you not? Well, I shall have ten thousand for you."

"You are not boasting?"

"Do you wish for a proof?"

"Yes."

There were three candles alight—each of which burned before a window—one looking upon the city, the other upon the Palais Royal, and a third upon the Rue St. Denis.

The man went silently to each of the candles, and blew them out one after the other.

"What are you doing?" asked the coadjutor.

"I have given the signal."

"For what?"

"For the barricades. When you leave this, you will see my men at their work. Only take care not to break your legs in stumbling over some chain, nor to fall into some hole."

"Good! there is your money—the same sum as that which you have received already. Now remember that you are a general, and do not go and drink."

"For twenty years I have tasted nothing but water."

The man took the bag from the hands of the coadjutor, who heard the sound of his fingers counting and handling the gold pieces.

"Ah! ah!" said the coadjutor, "you are avaricious, my good fellow."

The mendicant sighed, and threw down the bag.

"Must I always be the same," said he, "and shall I never succeed in overcoming the old leaven? Oh misery, oh vanity!"

"You take it, however."

"Yes, but I make a vow in your presence, to employ all that remains to me in pious works."

His face was pale and drawn, like that of a man who had just undergone an inward struggle.

"Singular man!" muttered Gondy, taking his hat to go away, when he saw the beggar between him and the door. His first idea was that this man intended to do him some harm—but on the contrary he soon fell on his knees before him, with his hands clasped.

"Your blessing, your holiness, before you go, I beseech you!" he cried.

"Your holiness!" said Gondy; "my friend, you take me for some one else."

"No, your holiness, I take you for what you are; that is to say, the coadjutor—I recognized you at the first glance."

Gondy smiled. "And you want my blessing?" he said.

"Yes, I have need of it."

The mendicant uttered these words in a tone of such great humility, and such earnest repentance, that Gondy placed his hand upon him, and gave him his benediction with all the unction of which he was capable.

"Now," said the coadjutor, "there is a communion between us. I have blessed you, and you are sacred to me. Come, have you committed some crime, pursued by human justice, from which I can protect you?"

The beggar shook his head. "The crime which I have committed, my lord, has no call upon human justice, and you can only deliver me from it in blessing me frequently as you have just done."

"Come, be candid," said the coadjutor, "you have not all your life followed the trade which you do now?"

"No, my lord. I have pursued it for six years only."

"And previously, where were you?"

"In the Bastille."

"And before you went to the Bastille?"

"I will tell you, my lord, on the day when you are willing to hear my confession."

"Good! at whatever hour of the day, or of the night on which you present yourself, remember that I shall be ready to give you absolution."

"Thank you, my lord," said the mendicant in a hoarse voice. "But I am not yet ready to receive it."

"Very well. Adieu."

"Adieu, your holiness," said the mendicant, opening the door, and bending low before the prelate.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE RIOT.

IT WAS about eleven o'clock at night. Gondy had not walked a hundred steps ere he perceived the strange change which had been made in the streets of Paris.

The whole city seemed peopled with fantastic beings; silent shadows were seen unpaving the streets, and others dragging and upsetting great wagons, while others again dug ditches large enough to engulf whole regiments of horsemen. These active beings flitted here and there like so many demons completing some unknown labor—these were the beggars of the Court of Miracles—the agents of the giver of holy water in the square of St. Eustache—preparing the barricades for the morrow.

Gondy gazed on these men of darkness—these nocturnal laborers with a kind of fear: he asked himself if, after having called forth these foul creatures from their dens, he should have the power of making them retire again. He felt almost inclined to cross himself when one of these beings happened to approach him. He reached the Rue St. Honore and went up it toward the Rue de la Ferronnière: there, the aspect changed; here it was the tradesmen who were running from shop to shop: their doors seemed closed like their shutters; but they were only pushed to in such a manner as to open and allow the men, who seemed fearful of showing what they carried, to enter, closing immediately. These men were shopkeepers, who had arms to lend to those who had none.

One individual went from door to door, bending under the weight of swords, guns, muskets, and every kind of weapon, which he deposited as fast as he could. By the light of a lantern the coadjutor recognized Planchet.

On reaching the Pont Neuf, the coadjutor found this bridge guarded, and a man approached him.

"Who are you?" asked the man; "I do not know you for one of us."

"Then it is because you do not know your friends, my dear Monsieur Louvières," said the coadjutor, raising his hat.

Louvières recognized him and bowed.

Gondy continued his way, and went as far as the Tour de Nesle. There he saw a long line of people gliding under the walls. They might be said to be a procession of ghosts, for they were all wrapped in white cloaks. When they reached a certain spot, these men seemed to be annihilated one after the other, as if the earth had opened under their feet. Gondy edged into a corner, saw them vanish from the first until the last but one. The last raised his eyes, to ascertain doubtless that neither his companions nor himself had been watched, and in spite of the darkness he perceived Gondy. He walked straight up to him, and placed a pistol to his throat.

"Holloa, Monsieur de Rochefort," said Gondy, laughing, "do not let us play with firearms."

Rochefort recognized the voice.

"Ah, it is you, my lord," said he.

"Myself. What people are you leading thus into the bowels of the earth?"

"My fifty recruits from the Chevalier d'Humières, who are

destined to enter the light cavalry, and who have only received for their equipment their white cloaks."

"And where are you going?"

"To one of my friends, a sculptor, only we descend by the trap through which he lets down his marble."

"Very good," said Gondy, shaking Rochefort by the hand, who descended in his turn, and closed the trap after him.

It was now one o'clock in the morning, and the coadjutor returned home. He opened a window and leaned out to listen. A strange, incomprehensible, unearthly sound seemed to pervade the whole city; one felt that something unusual and terrible was happening in all the streets, now dark as abysses.

The work of revolt continued the whole night thus. The next morning, on awaking, Paris seemed to be startled at her own appearance. It was like a besieged town. Armed men, shouldering muskets, watched over the barricades with menacing looks; words of command, patrols, arrests, executions, even, were encountered at every step. Those bearing plumed hats and gold swords were stopped and made to cry, "Long live Broussel!" "Down with Mazarin!" and whoever refused to comply with this ceremony was hooted at, spat upon, and even beaten. They had not yet begun to slay, but it was well felt that the inclination to do so was not wanting.

The barricades had been pushed as far as the Palais Royal, and the astonishment of Mazarin and of Anne of Austria was great when it was announced to them that the city, which the previous evening they had left tranquil, had awakened so feverish and in such commotion; nor would either the one or the other believe the reports which were brought to them, and declared that they would rather rely on the evidence of their own eyes and ears. Then a window was opened, and when they saw and heard, they were convinced.

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders, and pretended to despise the populace much; but he turned visibly pale, and ran to his closet trembling all over, locked up his gold and jewels in his caskets, and put his finest diamonds on his fingers. As for the queen, furious, and left to her own guidance, she sent for the Maréchal de la Meilleraie, and desired him to take as many men as he pleased, and to go and see what was the meaning of this pleasantry.

We have already said that Mazarin was in his closet, putting

his little affairs into order. He called for D'Artagnan, but in the midst of such tumult he little expected to see him, D'Artagnan not being on service. In about ten minutes D'Artagnan appeared at the door, followed by his inseparable, Porthos.

"Ah, come—come in, Monsieur d'Artagnan," cried the cardinal, "and be welcome, as well as your friend. But what is going on, then, in this cursed Paris?"

"What is going on, my lord? nothing good," replied D'Artagnan, shaking his head: "the town is in open revolt; and just now, as I was crossing the Rue Montorgueil with Monsieur de Valon, who is here, and is your humble servant, they wanted, in spite of my uniform, or, perhaps, because of my uniform, to make us cry, 'Long live Broussel!' and must I tell you, my lord, what they wished us to cry as well?"

"Speak, speak."

"Down with Mazarin!" I'faith, the big word is out now." Mazarin smiled, but became very pale.

"And you did cry?" he asked.

"I'faith, no," said D'Artagnan, "I was not in voice; Monsieur de Valon has a cold, and did not cry either. Then, my lord——"

"Then what?" asked Mazarin.

"Look at my hat and cloak."

And D'Artagnan displayed four gunshot holes in his cloak and two in his beaver. As for Porthos' coat, a blow from a halberd had cut it open on the flank, and a pistol-shot had cut his feather in two.

"*Diavolo!*" said the cardinal, pensively, gazing at the two friends with lively admiration; "I should have cried, I should."

At this moment the tumult was heard nearer.

Mazarin wiped his forehead and looked around him. He had a great desire to go to the window, but he dared not.

"See what is going on, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said he.

D'Artagnan went to the window, with his habitual composure.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "what is that? Maréchal de la Meilleraie returning without a hat—Fontrailles with his arm in a sling—wounded guards—horses bleeding—eh, then, what are the sentinels about? they are aiming—they are going to fire!"

"They have received orders to fire on the people, if the people approach the Palais Royal!" exclaimed Mazarin.

"But if they fire all is lost!" cried D'Artagnan.

"We have the gates."

"The gates! to hold for five minutes—the gates, they will be torn down, bent, ground to powder! God's death, don't fire!" screamed D'Artagnan, throwing open the window.

In spite of this recommendation, which, owing to the noise, could not have been heard, two or three musket-shots resounded, which was succeeded by a terrible discharge. The balls might be heard peppering the façade of the Palais Royal, and one of them, passing under D'Artagnan's arm, entered and broke a mirror, in which Porthos was complacently admiring himself.

"Alack, alack," cried the cardinal; "a Venetian glass!"

"Oh, my lord," said D'Artagnan, quietly shutting the window, "it is not worth while weeping yet, for probably an hour hence there will not be one of your mirrors remaining in the Palais Royal, whether they be Venetian or Parisian."

"But what do you advise, then?" asked Mazarin, trembling.

"Eh, egad, to give up Broussel, as they demand! What the devil do you want with a member of the parliament? He is of no use for anything."

"And you, Monsieur de Valon, is that your advice? What would you do?"

"I should give up Broussel."

"Come, come with me, gentlemen!" exclaimed Mazarin.

"I will go and discuss the matter with the queen."

He stopped at the end of the corridor, and said:

"I can count upon you, gentlemen, can I not?"

"We do not give ourselves twice over," said D'Artagnan; "we have given ourselves to you—command, we shall obey."

"Very well, then," said Mazarin; "enter this closet and wait there."

And turning off, he entered the drawing-room by another door.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE RIOT BECOMES A REVOLUTION.

THE closet into which D'Artagnan and Porthos had been ushered was separated from the drawing-room where the queen was by tapestried curtains only, and this thin partition enabled them to hear all that passed in the adjoining room, while the aperture between the two hangings, small as it was, permitted them to see.

The queen was standing in the room, pale with anger; her self-control, however, was so great that it might have been supposed that she was calm. Comminges, Villequier, and Guitant were behind her, and the women again were behind the men. The Chancellor Séguier, who twenty years previously had persecuted her so violently, was before her, relating how his carriage had been broken, how he had been pursued, and had rushed into the Hotel d'O——, that the hotel was immediately invested, pillaged, and devastated: happily, he had time to reach a closet hidden behind tapestry, in which he was secreted by an old woman, together with his brother, the Bishop of Meaux. Fortunately, however, he had not been taken; the people, believing that he had escaped by some back entrance, had retired, and left him to retreat at liberty. Then, disguised in the clothes of the Marquis d'O——, he had left the hotel, stumbling over the bodies of an officer and those of two guards who were killed while defending the street door.

During the recital Mazarin entered and glided noiselessly up to the queen to listen.

"Well," said the queen, when the chancellor had finished speaking; "what do you think of it all?"

"I think that matters look very gloomy, madame."

"But what step would you propose to me?"

"I could propose one to your majesty—but I dare not."

"You may, you may, sir," said the queen, with a bitter smile; "you were not so timid once."

The chancellor reddened, and stammered some words.

"It is not a question of the past, but of the present," said the queen; "you said you could give me advice—what is it?"

"Madame," said the chancellor, hesitating, "it would be to release Broussel."

The queen, although already pale, became visibly paler, and her face was contracted.

"Release Broussel!" she cried, "never!"

At this moment steps were heard in the anteroom, and, without any announcement, the Maréchal de la Meilleraie appeared at the door.

"Ah, there you are, maréchal," cried Anne of Austria joyfully. "I trust you have brought this rabble to reason."

"Madame," replied the maréchal, "I have left three men on the Pont Neuf, four at the Halle, six at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, and two at the door of your palace—fifteen in all. I have brought away ten or twelve wounded. I know not where I have left my hat, and in all probability I

should have been left with my hat, had the coadjutor not arrived in time to rescue me."

"Ah, indeed!" said the queen, "it would have astonished me if that low cur, with his distorted legs, had not been mixed up with it."

"Madame," said La Meilleraie, "do not say too much against him before me, for the service he rendered me is still fresh."

"Very good," said the queen, "be as grateful as you like, it does not implicate me; you are here safe and sound, that is all I wished for, therefore you are not only welcome, but welcome back."

"Yes, madame; but I only came back on one condition—that I would transmit to your majesty the will of the people."

"The will!" exclaimed the queen, frowning. "Oh! oh! Monsieur Maréchal, you must indeed have found yourself in great peril to have undertaken so strange a commission!"

The irony with which these words were uttered did not escape the maréchal.

"Pardon, madame," he said, "I am not a lawyer, I am a mere soldier, and probably, therefore, I do not quite comprehend the value of certain words; I ought to have said the wishes, and not the will, of the people. As for what you do me the honor to say, I presume that you mean that I felt fear."

The queen smiled.

"Well, then, madame, yes I did feel fear; and though I have seen twelve pitched battles, and I know not how many fights and skirmishes, I own that, for the third time in my life, I was afraid. Yes; and I would rather face your majesty, however threatening your smile, than face those hell-demons who accompanied me hither, and who spring from I know not where."

"Bravo," said D'Artagnan, in a whisper to Porthos; "well answered."

"Well," said the queen, biting her lips, while her courtiers looked at each other with surprise, "what is the desire of my people?"

"That Broussel should be given up to them, madame."

"Never!" said the queen, "never!"

"Your majesty is mistress," said La Meilleraie, retreating a few steps.

"Where are you going, maréchal?" asked the queen.

"To give your majesty's reply to those who await it."

"Stay, maréchal; I will not appear to parley with the rebels."

"Madame, I have given my word; and unless you order me to be arrested, I shall be forced to return."

Anne of Austria's eyes shot glances of fire.

"Oh! that is no impediment, sir," said she; "I have had greater men than you arrested—Guitant!"

Mazarin sprang forward.

"Madame," said he, "if I dared in my turn advise——"

"Would it be to give up Broussel, sir? If so, you can spare yourself the trouble."

"No," said Mazarin; "although, perhaps, that is as good a counsel as any other."

"Then what may it be?"

"To call for Monsieur le Coadjuteur."

"And hold, madame," suggested Comminges, who was near a window, out of which he could see; "hold, the moment is a happy one, for there he is now giving his blessing in the square of the Palais Royal."

The queen sprang to the window.

"It is true," she said; "the arch-hypocrite!—see!"

"I see," said Mazarin, "that everybody kneels before him, although he be but coadjutor, while I—were I in his place—though I be cardinal, should be torn to pieces. I persist, then, madame, in my wish" (he laid an emphasis on the word) "that your majesty should receive the coadjutor."

"And wherefore say you not, like the rest, your will?" replied the queen, in a low voice.

Mazarin bowed.

"Monsieur le Maréchal," said the queen, after a moment's reflection, "go and find the coadjutor, and bring him to me."

"And what shall I say to the people?"

"They must have patience," said Anne, "as I have."

The maréchal bowed and went out; and, during his absence, Anne of Austria approached Comminges, and conversed with him in a subdued tone, while Mazarin glanced uneasily at the corner occupied by D'Artagnan and Porthos. Ere long the door opened, and the maréchal entered, followed by the coadjutor.

"There, madame," he said, "is Monsieur Gondy, who hastens to obey your majesty's summons."

The queen advanced a few steps to meet him, and then stopped, cold, severe, and unmoved, and her lower lip scornfully projected. Gondy bowed respectfully.

"Well, sir," said the queen, "what is your opinion of this riot?"

"That it is no longer a riot, madame," he replied, "but a revolt."

"The revolt is in those who think that my people can revolt," cried Anne, unable to dissimulate before the coadjutor, whom she looked upon—and perhaps with reason—as the promoter of the tumult. "Revolt! thus it is called by those who have wished for this demonstration, and who are, perhaps, the cause of it; but wait, wait! the king's authority will put it all to rights."

"Was it to tell me that, madame," coldly replied Gondy, "that your majesty admitted me to the honor of entering your presence?"

"No, my dear coadjutor," said Mazarin; "it was to ask your advice in the unhappy dilemma in which we find ourselves."

"Is it true?" asked Gondy, feigning astonishment, "that her majesty summoned me to ask my opinion?"

"Yes," said the queen, "it was requested."

The coadjutor bowed.

"Your majesty wishes then——"

"You to say what you would do in her place," Mazarin hastened to reply.

The coadjutor looked at the queen, who replied by a sign in the affirmative.

"Were I in her majesty's place," said Gondy coldly, "I should not hesitate. I should release Broussel."

"And if I do not give him up, what think you will be the result?" exclaimed the queen.

"I believe that not a stone in Paris will remain unturned," said the maréchal.

"It was not your opinion that I asked," said the queen, sharply, without even turning round.

"If it is I whom your majesty interrogates," replied the coadjutor, in the same calm manner, "I reply that I hold Monsieur le Maréchal's opinion in every respect."

The color mounted to the queen's face: her fine blue eyes seemed to start out of her head, and her carmine lips, compared by all the poets of the day to a pomegranate in flower, were white, and trembling with anger. Mazarin himself, who was well accustomed to the domestic outbreaks of this disturbed household, was alarmed.

"Give up Broussel!" she cried; "a good counsel, indeed. Upon my word! one can easily see that it comes from a priest."

Gondy remained firm; and the abuse of the day seemed to glide over his head as the sarcasms of the evening before had done; but hatred and revenge were accumulating in the depth of his heart, silently, and drop by drop.

"Madame," he said, "if the opinion I have submitted to you does not please you, it is doubtless because you have better counsels to follow. I know too well the wisdom of the queen, and that of her adviser, to suppose that they will leave the capital long in trouble that might lead to a revolution."

"Thus, then, it is your opinion," said Anne of Austria, with a sneer, and biting her lips with rage, "that yesterday's riot, which, as to-day, is already a rebellion, to-morrow might become a revolution."

"Yes, madame," replied the coadjutor gravely.

"But, if I believe you, sir, the people seem to have thrown off all restraint."

"It is a bad year for kings," said Gondy, shaking his head; "look at England, madame."

"Yes; but fortunately we have no Oliver Cromwell in France," replied the queen.

"Who knows?" said Gondy; "these men are like thunderbolts—one recognizes them only when they have struck."

Every one shuddered; and there was a moment of silence, during which the queen pressed her hand to her side, evidently to still the beatings of her heart. At last she made a sign for every one, except Mazarin, to quit the room; and Gondy bowed, as if to leave with the rest.

"Stay, sir," said Anne to him.

"Good," thought Gondy, "she is going to yield."

"She is going to have him killed," said D'Artagnan to Porthos, "but at all events, it shall not be by me. I swear to heaven, on the contrary, that if they fall upon him, I will fall upon them."

"And I too," said Porthos.

"Good," muttered Mazarin, sitting down, "we shall see something fresh."

The queen's eyes followed the retreating figures, and, when the last had closed the door, she turned away. It was evident that she was making unnatural efforts to subdue her anger; she fanned herself, smelled at her vinaigrette, and walked up and down. Gondy, who began to feel uneasy, examined the tapestry with his eyes, touched the coat of mail which he wore under his long gown, and felt from time to time to see if the handle of a good Spanish dagger, which was hidden under his cloak, was well within reach of his hand.

"And now," at last said the queen, "now that we are alone, repeat your counsel, Monsieur le Coadjuteur."

"It is this, madame; that you should appear to have re-

flected, and publicly acknowledge an error—which constitutes the strength of a strong government—release Broussel from prison, and give him back to the people.”

“Oh!” cried Anne, “to humble myself thus! Am I, or am I not, the queen? This screaming mob, are they, or are they not, my subjects? Have I friends? Have I guards? Ah! by Nôtre Dame! as Queen Catherine used to say,” continued she, excited by her own words, “rather than give up this infamous Broussel to them, I will strangle him with my own hands.”

And she sprang toward Gondy, whom assuredly at that moment she hated more than Broussel, with outstretched arms. The coadjutor remained immovable, and not a muscle of his face was discomposed: only his glance flashed like a sword, in returning the furious looks of the queen.

“He were a dead man,” said the Gascon, “if there were still a Vitry at the court, and if Vitry entered at this moment; but for my part, before he could reach the good prelate, I would kill Vitry at once; the cardinal would be infinitely pleased with me.”

“Hush!” said Porthos, “and listen.”

“Madame,” cried the cardinal, seizing hold of Anne, and drawing her back—“madame, what are you about?”

Then he added in Spanish, “Anne, are you mad? You a queen and quarreling thus like a shopwoman! And do you not perceive that in the person of this priest is represented the whole people of Paris, and that it is dangerous to insult him at this moment, and that if this priest wished it, in an hour you would be without a crown? Come, then, on another occasion you can be firm and strong; but to-day is not the proper time; to-day, you must flatter and caress, or you will be but an ordinary person.”

This rough appeal, marked by the eloquence which characterized Mazarin when he spoke in Italian or Spanish, and which he lost entirely in speaking French, was uttered with such impenetrable expression that Gondy, clever physiognomist as he was, had no suspicion of its being more than a simple warning to be more subdued.

The queen, on her part, thus chided, softened immediately and sat down, and in an almost weeping voice, letting her arms fall by her sides, said:

“Pardon me, sir, and attribute this violence to what I suffer. A woman, and, consequently, subject to the weaknesses of my sex, I am alarmed at the idea of civil war; a queen—and accustomed to be obeyed—I am excited at the first opposition.”

"Madame," replied Gondy, bowing, "your majesty is mistaken in qualifying my sincere advice as opposition. Your majesty has none but submissive and respectful subjects. It is not the queen with whom the people are displeased; they ask for Broussel, and are only too happy, if you release him to them, to live under your government."

Mazarin, who at the words "It is not the queen with whom the people are displeased," had pricked up his ears, thought that the coadjutor was about to speak of the cries, "Down with Mazarin!" and pleased with Gondy's suppression of this fact, he said, with his sweetest voice, and his most gracious expression:

"Madame, believe the coadjutor, who is one of the most able politicians that we have; the first vacant cardinal's hat seems to belong to his noble head."

"Ah! how much you have need of me, cunning rogue," thought Gondy.

"And what will he promise us?" said D'Artagnan. "*Peste*, if he is giving away hats like that, Porthos, let us look out, and each ask a regiment to-morrow. *Corbleu*, let the civil war last but one year, and I will have a constable's sword gilt for me."

"And for me?" said Porthos.

"For you! I will give you the *baton* of the Maréchal de la Meillerie, who does not seem to be much in favor just now."

"And so, sir," said the queen, "you are seriously afraid of a public tumult?"

"Seriously," said Gondy, astonished at not having further advanced; "I fear that when the torrent has broken down its embankment it will cause fearful destruction."

"And I," said the queen, "think that in such a case new embankments must be raised to oppose it. Go—I will reflect."

Gondy looked at Mazarin, astonished, and Mazarin approached the queen to speak to her, but at this moment a frightful tumult arose from the square of the Palais Royal.

Gondy smiled, the queen's color rose, and Mazarin became very pale.

"What is that again?" he asked.

At this moment Comminges rushed into the room.

"Pardon, your majesty," he cried, "but the people have dashed the sentinels against the gates, and they are now forcing the doors; what are your commands—for time presses."

"How many men have you about at the Palace Royal?"

"Six hundred men."

"Place a hundred men round the king, and with the remainder sweep away this mob for me."

"Madame," cried Mazarin, "what are you about?"

"Go," said the queen.

At this moment a terrible crash was heard. One of the gates began to yield.

"Oh! madame," cried Mazarin, "you have lost us all; the king, yourself, and me."

At this cry from the soul of the frightened cardinal, Anne became alarmed in her turn, and would have recalled Comminges.

"It is too late!" said Mazarin, tearing his hair, "too late!"

The gate had given way, and shouts were heard from the mob. D'Artagnan put his hand to his sword, motioning to Porthos to follow his example.

"Save the queen!" cried Mazarin to the coadjutor.

Gondy sprang to the window and threw it open; he recognized Louvières at the head of a troop of about three or four thousand men.

"Not a step further," he shouted, "the queen is signing!"

"What are you saying?" asked the queen.

"The truth, madame," said Mazarin, placing a pen and a paper before her; "you must;" then he added, "Sign, Anne, I implore you—I command you."

The queen fell into a chair, took the pen and signed.

The people, kept back by Louvières, had not made another step forward; but the awful murmuring, which indicates an angry people, continued.

The queen had written, "The keeper of the prison of St. Germain will put Counsellor Broussel at liberty;" and she had signed it.

The coadjutor, whose eyes devoured her slightest movements, seized the paper immediately the signature had been affixed to it, returned to the window and waved it in his hand.

"This is the order," he said.

All Paris seemed to shout for joy; and then the air resounded with the cries of "Long live Broussel!" "Long live the coadjutor!"

"Long live the queen!" cried De Gondy: but the cries which replied to his were poor and few; and perhaps he had but uttered it to make Anne of Austria sensible of her weakness.

"And now that you have obtained what you want, go," said she, "Monsieur de Gondy."

"Whenever her majesty has need of me," replied the coadjutor, bowing, "her majesty knows that I am at her command."

"Ah, cursed priest!" cried Anne, when he had retired, stretching out her arm to the scarcely closed door, "one day I will make you drink the remains of the gall which you have poured out on me to-day."

Mazarin wished to approach her. "Leave me!" she exclaimed; "you are not a man!" and she went out of the room.

"It is you who are not a woman," muttered Mazarin.

Then, after a moment of reverie, he remembered where he had left D'Artagnan and Porthos, and that they must have overheard everything. He knit his brows and went direct to the tapestry, which he pushed aside. The closet was empty.

At the queen's last word D'Artagnan had dragged Porthos into the gallery. Thither Mazarin went in his turn, and found the two friends walking up and down.

"Why did you leave the closet, Monsieur D'Artagnan?" said the cardinal.

"Because," said D'Artagnan, "the queen desired every one to leave, and I thought that this command was intended for us as well as for the rest."

"And you have been here since——"

"About a quarter of an hour," said D'Artagnan, motioning to Porthos not to contradict him.

Mazarin saw the sign, and remained convinced that D'Artagnan had seen and heard everything; but he was pleased with his falsehood.

"Decidedly, Monsieur D'Artagnan, you are the man I have been seeking—and you may reckon upon me, as may your friend, too."

Then, bowing to the two friends, with his most gracious smile, he re-entered his closet more calmly, for on the departure of De Gondy, the uproar had ceased as if by enchantment.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MISFORTUNE REFRESHES THE MEMORY.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA returned to her oratory furious.

"What!" she cried, wringing her beautiful hands, "what! the people have seen Monsieur de Condé, a prince of the blood

royal, arrested by my mother-in-law, Maria de Medicis; they saw my mother-in-law, their former regent, expelled by the cardinal; they saw Monsieur de Vendôme, that is to say, the son of Henry IV., a prisoner at Vincennes; and while these great personages were imprisoned, insulted and threatened, they said nothing; and now for a Broussel!—good God—what then is become of royalty!”

The queen unconsciously touched here upon the exciting question. The people had made no demonstration for the princes, but they had risen for Broussel; they were taking the part of a plebeian, and in defending Broussel, they instinctively felt that they were defending themselves.

During this time Mazarin walked up and down his study, glancing from time to time at his beautiful Venetian mirror, starred all over. “Ah!” he said, “it is sad, I know well, to be forced to yield thus; but—pshaw—we shall have our revenge; what matters it about Broussel—it is a name, not a thing.”

Mazarin, clever politician as he was, was for once mistaken; Broussel was a thing, not a name.

The next morning, therefore, when Broussel made his entrance into Paris in a large carriage, having his son Louvières at his side, and Friquet behind the vehicle, the people threw themselves in his way, and cries of “Long live Broussel!” “Long live our father!” resounded from all parts, and was death to Mazarin’s ears; and the cardinal’s spies brought bad news from every direction, which greatly agitated the minister, but were calmly received by the queen. The latter seemed to be maturing in her mind some great stroke—a fact which increased the uneasiness of the cardinal, who knew the proud princess, and who dreaded much the determination of Anne of Austria.

The coadjutor returned to parliament more a monarch than the king, queen, and the cardinal were, all three together. By his advice, a decree from parliament had summoned the citizens to lay down their arms, and to demolish the barricades. They now knew that it required but one hour to take up arms again, and only one night to reconstruct the barricades.

D’Artagnan profited by a moment of calm to send away Raoul, whom he had had great difficulty in keeping shut up during the riot, and who wished positively to strike a blow for one party or the other. Raoul had offered some opposition at first; but D’Artagnan made use of the Count de la Fère’s name, and, after paying a visit to Madame de Chevreuse, Raoul started to rejoin the army.

Rochefort alone was dissatisfied with the termination of affairs. He had written to the Duc de Beaufort to come, and the duke was about to arrive, and he would find Paris tranquil. He went to the coadjutor to consult with him whether it were not better to send word to the duke to stop on the road, but Gondy reflected a moment, and then said:

"Let him continue his journey."

"But all is not then over?" asked Rochefort.

"Good, my dear count; we have only just begun."

"What induces you to think so?"

"The knowledge that I have of the queen's heart; she will not rest beaten."

"Come, let us see what you know."

"I know that she has written to the prince to return in haste from the army."

"Ah, ah!" said Rochefort, "you are right. We must let Monsieur de Beaufort come."

In fact, the evening after this conversation, the report was circulated that the Prince Condé had arrived. It was a very simple and natural circumstance, and yet it created a great sensation. It was said that Madame de Longueville, for whom the prince had more than a brother's affection, and in whom he had confided, had been indiscreet. His confidence had unveiled the sinister projects of the queen.

Even on the night of the prince's return, some citizens, more bold than the rest, such as the sheriffs, the captains, and the quartermaster, went from house to house among their friends, saying:

"Why do we not take the king, and place him in the Hotel de Ville? It is a shame to leave him to be educated by our enemies, who will give him evil counsels; whereas, brought up by the coadjutor, for instance, he would imbibe national principles, and love his people."

That night was secretly agitated, and on the morrow the gray and black cloaks, the patrols of armed shop-people, and the bands of mendicants had reappeared.

The queen had passed the night in conference alone with the prince, who had entered her oratory at midnight, and did not leave till five o'clock in the morning.

At five o'clock Anne went to the cardinal's room. If she had not yet taken any repose, he at least was already up. Six days had already passed out of the ten he had asked from Mordaunt; he was therefore occupied in correcting his reply to Cromwell, when some one knocked gently at the door of communication with the queen's apartments. Anne of

Austria alone was permitted to enter by that door. The cardinal therefore rose to open it.

The queen was in a morning gown, but it became her still; for, like Diana of Poitiers and Ninon, Anne of Austria enjoyed the privilege of remaining ever beautiful; nevertheless, this morning she looked handsomer than usual, for her eyes had all the sparkle which inward satisfaction added to their expression.

"What is the matter, madame?" said Mazarin uneasily. "You have quite a proud look."

"Yes, Giulio," she said, "proud and happy; for I have found the means of stifling this hydra."

"You are a great politician, my queen," said Mazarin; "let us see the means." And he hid what he had written by sliding the letter under a sheet of white paper.

"You know," said the queen, "that they want to take the king away from me."

"Alas! yes, and to hang me!"

"They shall not have the king."

"Nor hang me."

"Listen. I want to carry off my son from them—with yourself and myself. I wish that this event, which, on the day it is known, will completely change the aspect of affairs, should be accomplished without the knowledge of any others but yourself, myself, and a third person."

"And who is the third person?"

"Monsieur le Prince."

"And you have seen him?"

"He has just left me."

"And will he aid this project?"

"The plan is his own."

"And Paris?"

"He will starve it out and force it to surrender at discretion."

"The plan is wanting not in grandeur, but I only see one impediment to it."

"What is it?"

"Impossibility."

"A senseless word; nothing is impossible. Have we money?"

"A little," said Mazarin, trembling lest Anne should ask to draw upon his purse.

"Have we troops?"

"Five or six thousand men."

"Have we courage?"

"Much."

"Then the thing is easy. Oh! do think of it, Giulio! Paris, this odious Paris, awaking one morning without queen or king, surrounded, besieged, famished—having, as an only resource, its stupid parliament, and their coadjutor, with crooked limbs!"

"Charming! charming!" said Mazarin. "I see the effect, but I do not see the way to obtain it."

"I will find it out myself."

"You are aware that it will be war—civil war—furious, burning, and implacable?"

"Oh! yes, yes. War," said Anne of Austria. "Yes, I will reduce this rebellious city to ashes. I will extinguish the fire by blood. I will perpetuate the crime and the punishment by making a frightful example. Paris!—I hate it!—I detest it!"

"Very fine, Anne. You are now sanguinary; but take care. We are not in the time of the Malatesta and the Castruccio Castracani. You will get yourself decapitated, my beautiful queen, and that would be a pity."

"You laugh."

"Faintly. It is dangerous to go to war with a whole nation. Look at your brother monarch, Charles I. He is badly off—very badly."

"We are in France, and I am Spanish."

"So much the worse; I would much rather you were French, and myself also—they would hate us both less."

"Nevertheless, you consent?"

"Yes, if the thing be possible."

"It is; it is I who tell you so; make your preparations for departure."

"I! I am always prepared to go, only you know I never do go and, perhaps, shall do this time as little as before."

"In short, if I go, will you go too?"

"I shall try."

"You torment me, Giulio, with your fears; and what are you afraid of, then?"

"Of many things."

"What are they?"

Mazarin's face, smiling as it was, became clouded.

"Anne," said he, "you are but a woman, and as a woman you may insult men at your ease, knowing that you can do it with impunity; you accuse me of fear; I have not so much as you have, since I do not fly as you do. Against whom do they cry out? is it against you, or against myself? Whom

would they hang—yourself or me? Well, I can weather the storm; I—whom, notwithstanding you tax with fear—not with bravado, that is not my way, but I am firm. Imitate me; make less noise, and do more. You cry very loud, you end by doing nothing; you talk of flying——”

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders, and taking the queen's hand, led her to a window.

“Look!” he said.

“Well?” said the queen, blinded by her obstinacy.

“Well, what do you see from this window? If I am not mistaken, those are citizens, helmeted and mailed, armed with good muskets, as in the time of the League, and whose eyes are so intently fixed on this window, that they will see you if you raise that curtain much; and now come to the other side—what do you see? Creatures of the people, armed with the halberds, guarding your doors. You will see the same at every opening from this palace to which I should lead you. Your doors are guarded, the air-holes of your cellars are guarded, and I could say to you, as that good La Ramée said to me of the Duc de Beaufort, you must be either bird or mouse to get out.”

“He did get out, however.”

“Do you think of escaping in the same way?”

“I am a prisoner, then?”

“*Parbleu!*” said Mazarin, “I have been proving it to you this last hour.”

And he quietly resumed his despatch at the place where he had been interrupted.

Anne, trembling with anger, and red with humiliation, left the room, shutting the door violently after her. Mazarin did not even turn round. When once more in her own apartment, Anne fell into a chair and wept; then, suddenly struck with an idea:

“I am saved!” she exclaimed, rising; “oh, yes, yes! I know a man who will find the means of taking me from Paris; a man whom I have too long forgotten.” Then, falling into a reverie, she added, however, with an expression of joy, “Ungrateful woman that I am, for twenty years I have forgotten this man, whom I ought to have made *maréchal* of France. My mother-in-law expended gold, caresses, and dignities on Concini, who ruined her; the king made Vitry *maréchal* of France for an assassination; while I have left in obscurity, in poverty, that noble D'Artagnan, who saved me.”

And running to a table, upon which were placed paper and ink, she began to write.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

IT HAD been D'Artagnan's practice, ever since the riots, to sleep in the same room as Porthos, and on this eventful morning he was still there, sleeping, and dreaming that a large yellow cloud had overspread the sky, and was raining gold pieces into his hat, while he held it under a spout. As for Porthos, he dreamed that the panels of his carriage were not spacious enough to contain the armorial bearings which he had ordered to be painted upon them. They were both aroused at seven o'clock by the entrance of an unliveried servant, who had brought a letter to D'Artagnan.

"From whom is it?" asked the Gascon.

"From the queen," replied the servant.

"Ho!" said Porthos, raising himself in his bed, "what does she say?"

D'Artagnan requested the servant to wait in the next room, and when the door was closed, he sprung up from his bed, and read rapidly, while Porthos looked at him with starting eyes, not daring to ask a single question.

"Friend Porthos," said D'Artagnan, handing the letter to him, "this time, at least, you are sure of your title of baron, and I of my captaincy. There, read and judge."

Porthos took the letter, and with a trembling voice read the following words:

"The queen wishes to speak to Monsieur d'Artagnan, who must follow the bearer."

"Well!" exclaimed Porthos, "I see nothing in that very extraordinary."

"But I see much that is extraordinary in it," replied D'Artagnan. "It is evident, by their sending for me, that matters are becoming complicated. Just reflect a little what an agitation the queen's mind must be in, for her to have remembered me after twenty years."

"It is true," said Porthos.

"Sharpen your sword, baron, load your pistols, and give some corn to the horses, for I will answer for it, something new will happen before to-morrow."

"But stop; do you think it can be a trap that they are laying for us?" suggested Porthos, incessantly thinking how his greatness must be irksome to other people.

"If it is a snare," replied D'Artagnan, "I shall scent it out, be assured. If Mazarin be an Italian, I am a Gascon."

And D'Artagnan dressed himself in an instant.

While Porthos, still in bed, was hooking on his cloak for him, a second knock at the door was heard.

"Come in," cried D'Artagnan; and another servant entered.

"From his eminence, Cardinal Mazarin," he said, presenting a letter.

D'Artagnan glanced at Porthos, and said:

"It is arranged capitally; his eminence expects me in half an hour."

"Good."

"My friend," said D'Artagnan, turning to the servant, "tell his eminence that in half an hour I shall be at his command."

"It is very fortunate," resumed the Gascon, when the valet had retired, "that he did not meet the other one."

"Do you not think that they have sent for you, both for the same thing?"

"I do not think it, I am certain of it."

"Quick, quick, D'Artagnan. Remember that the queen awaits you; and after the queen, the cardinal; and after the cardinal, myself."

D'Artagnan summoned Anne of Austria's servant, and answered that he was ready to follow him.

The servant conducted him by the Rue des Petits-Champs, and turning to the left, entered the little garden gate leading into the Rue Richelieu; then they gained the private staircase, and D'Artagnan was ushered into the oratory. A certain emotion, for which he could not account, made the lieutenant's heart beat: he had no longer the assurance of youth, and experience taught him all the importance of past events. Formerly, he would have approached the queen, as a young man, who bends before a woman; but now it was a different thing: he answered her summons as an humble soldier obeys an illustrious general.

The silence of the oratory was at last disturbed by a slight rustling sound, and D'Artagnan started when he perceived the tapestry raised by a white hand, which, by its form, its color, and its beauty, he recognized as that royal hand which had one day been presented to him to kiss. The queen entered.

"It is you, Monsieur D'Artagnan," she said, fixing a gaze full of melancholy interest on the countenance of the officer, "and I know you well. Look at me well in your turn. I am the queen; do you recognize me?"

"No, madame," replied D'Artagnan.

"But are you no longer aware," continued Anne, giving that sweet expression to her voice which she could do at will, "that in former days the queen had once need of a young, brave, and devoted cavalier; that she found this cavalier; and that although he might have thought that she had forgotten him, she had kept a place for him in the depths of her heart."

"No, madame, I was ignorant of that," said the musketeer.

"So much the worse, sir," said Anne of Austria, "so much the worse, at least for the queen; for to-day she has need of the same courage, and of that same devotion."

"What!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "does the queen, surrounded as she is by such devoted servants, such wise counselors, men, in short, so great by their merit or their position—does she deign to cast her eyes on an obscure soldier?"

Anne understood this covert reproach, and was more moved than irritated by it. She had many a time felt humiliated by the self-sacrifice and disinterestedness shown by the Gascon gentleman, and she had allowed herself to be exceeded in generosity.

"All that you tell me of those by whom I am surrounded, Monsieur D'Artagnan, is doubtless true," said the queen, "but I have confidence in you alone. I know that you belong to the cardinal—but belong to me as well—and I will take upon myself the making of your fortune. Come, will you do to-day what formerly the gentleman whom you do not know did for the queen?"

"I will do everything which your majesty commands," replied D'Artagnan.

The queen reflected for a moment, and then, seeing the cautious demeanor of the musketeer.

"Perhaps you like repose?" she said.

"I do not know, for I have never had it, madame."

"Have you any friends?"

"I had three, two of whom have left Paris, to go I know not where. One alone is left to me, but he is one of those known, I believe, to the cavalier, of whom your majesty did me the honor to speak to me."

"Very good," said the queen, "you and your friend are worth an army."

"What am I to do, madame?"

"Return at five o'clock, and I will tell you: but do not breathe to a living soul, sir, the rendezvous which I give you."

"No, madame."

"Swear it by Christ."

"Madame, I have never been false to my word—when I say no, it means no."

The queen, although astonished at this language, to which she was not accustomed from her courtiers, argued from it a happy omen of the zeal with which D'Artagnan would serve her in the accomplishment of her project. It was one of the Gascon's artifices to hide his deep cunning occasionally under an appearance of rough loyalty.

"Has the queen any further commands for me now?" asked D'Artagnan.

"No, sir," replied Anne of Austria, "and you may retire until the time that I mentioned to you."

D'Artagnan bowed and went out.

"*Diable!*" he exclaimed, when the door was shut, "they seem to have great need of me here."

Then, as the half hour had already glided by, he crossed the gallery, and knocked at the cardinal's door.

"I come for your commands, my lord," he said.

And according to his custom, D'Artagnan glanced rapidly round him, and remarked that Mazarin had a sealed letter before him.

"You come from the queen?" said Mazarin, looking fixedly at D'Artagnan.

"I! my lord, who told you that?"

"Nobody, but I know it."

"I regret, infinitely, to tell you, my lord, that you are mistaken," replied the Gascon impudently, firm to the promise he had just made to Anne of Austria.

"I opened the door of the anteroom myself, and I saw you enter at the end of the corridor."

"Because I was shown up the private stairs."

"How so?"

"I know not, it must have been a mistake."

Mazarin was aware that it was not easy to make D'Artagnan reveal anything which he was desirous of hiding, so he therefore gave up, for the time, the discovery of the mystery which the Gascon made.

"Let us speak of my affairs," said Mazarin, "since you will tell me naught of yours. Are you fond of traveling?"

"My life has been passed on the highroads."

"Would anything retain you particularly in Paris?"

"Nothing but an order from a superior would retain me in Paris."

"Very well. Here is a letter which must be taken to its address."

"To its address, my lord? But it has none."

"I regret to say," resumed Mazarin, "that it is in a double envelope."

"I understand; and I am only to take off the first one when I have reached a certain place?"

"Just so—take it and go. You have a friend, Monsieur de Valon, whom I like much; let him accompany you."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan to himself. "He knows that we overheard his conversation yesterday, and he wants to get us away from Paris."

"Do you hesitate?" asked Mazarin.

"No, my lord, and I will set out at once. There is one thing only which I must request."

"What is it? speak."

"That your eminence will at once go to the queen."

"What for?"

"Merely to say these words: 'I am going to send Monsieur D'Artagnan away, and I wish him to set out directly.'"

"I told you," said Mazarin, "that you had seen the queen."

"I had the honor of saying to your eminence that there had been some mistake."

"Very well; I will go. Wait here for me." And looking attentively around him, to see if he had forgotten any keys in his closets, Mazarin went out. Ten minutes elapsed ere he returned, pale and evidently thoughtful. He seated himself at his desk, and D'Artagnan proceeded to examine his face, as he had just examined the letter he held; but the envelope which covered his countenance was almost as impenetrable as that which covered the letter.

"Eh! eh!" thought the Gascon; "he looks displeased. Can it be with me? He meditates. Is it about sending me to the Bastille? All very fine, my lord; but at the very first hint you give of such a thing, 'I will strangle you and become Frondist.' I should be carried in triumph like Monsieur Broussel, and Athos would proclaim me the French Brutus. It would be droll."

The Gascon, with his vivid imagination, had already seen the advantage to be derived from his situation; Mazarin gave, however, no order of the kind, but, on the contrary, began to be insinuating.

"You were right," he said, "my dear Monsieur D'Artagnan, and you cannot set out yet. I beg you, to return me that dispatch."

D'Artagnan obeyed, and Mazarin ascertained that the seal was intact.

"I shall want you this evening," he said. "Return in two hours."

"My lord," said D'Artagnan, "I have an appointment in two hours, which I cannot miss."

"Do not be uneasy," said Mazarin; "it is the same."

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan; "I fancied it was so."

"Return then at five o'clock, and bring that worthy Monsieur de Valon with you. Only, leave him in the anteroom, as I wish to speak to you alone."

D'Artagnan bowed, and thought—"Both at the same hour; both commands alike—both at the Palais Royal. I guess. Ah! Monsieur de Gondy would pay a hundred thousand francs for such a secret!"

"You are thoughtful," said Mazarin uneasily.

"Yes; I was thinking whether we ought to come armed or not."

"Armed to the teeth!" replied Mazarin.

"Very well, my lord, it shall be so."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE FLIGHT.

WHEN D'Artagnan returned to the Palais Royal at five o'clock, it presented, in spite of the excitement which reigned in the town, a spectacle of the greatest rejoicing. Nor was that surprising. The queen had restored Broussel and Blanchemesnil to the people, and had therefore nothing to fear, since the people had nothing more to ask for. The return also of the conqueror of Lens was the pretext for giving a grand banquet. The princes and princesses were invited, and their carriages had crowded the court since noon; then after dinner the queen was to form her poole of quadrille. Anne of Austria had never appeared more brilliant than on that day—radiant with grace and wit. Mazarin disappeared as they rose from table. He found D'Artagnan waiting for him already at his post in the anteroom. The cardinal advanced to him with a smile, and taking him by the hand, led him into his study.

"My dear *Monson* D'Artagnan," said the minister, sitting down, "I am about to give you the greatest proof of confidence that a minister can give to an officer."

"I hope," said D'Artagnan bowing, "that you give it, my lord, without hesitation, and with the conviction that I am worthy of it."

"More worthy than every one, my dear friend; therefore I apply to you. You are about to leave this evening," continued Mazarin. "My dear Monson d'Artagnan, the welfare of the state is reposed in your hand." He paused.

"Explain yourself, my lord; I am listening."

"The queen has resolved to make a little excursion with the king to St. Germain."

"Ah! ah!" said D'Artagnan, "that is to say, the queen wishes to leave Paris."

"A woman's caprice—you understand."

"Yes, I understand perfectly," said D'Artagnan.

"It was for this that she summoned you this morning and that she told you to return at five o'clock."

"Was it worth while to wish me to swear this morning that I would mention the appointment to no one?" muttered D'Artagnan. "Oh, women! women! whether queens or not, they are always the same."

"Do you disapprove of this journey, my dear Monson d'Artagnan?" asked Mazarin anxiously.

"I, my lord?" said D'Artagnan; "and why?"

"Because you shrug your shoulders."

"It is a way I have of speaking to myself. I neither approve nor disapprove, my lord; I merely await your commands."

"Good; it is you, therefore, that I have pitched upon to conduct the king and the queen to St. Germain."

"Liar!" said D'Artagnan to himself.

"You see, therefore," continued Mazarin, perceiving D'Artagnan's composure, "that, as I have told you, the welfare of the state is placed in your hands."

"Yes, my lord, and I feel the whole responsibility of such a charge."

"Do you think the thing possible?"

"Everything is."

"Shall you be attacked on the road?"

"Probably."

"And what would you do in that case?"

"I shall pass through those who attack me."

"And suppose you cannot pass through them?"

"So much the worse for them. I must pass over them."

"And you will place the king and queen safe also and at St. Germain?"

"Yes."

"On your life."

"On my life."

"You are a hero, my friend," said Mazarin, gazing at the musketeer with admiration.

D'Artagnan smiled.

"And I?" asked Mazarin, after a moment's silence.

"How? and you, my lord?"

"If I wish to leave?"

"That would be more difficult."

"Why so?"

"Your eminence might be recognized."

"Even under this disguise?" asked Mazarin, raising a cloak which covered an armchair, upon which lay a complete dress for an officer, of pearl-gray and red, entirely embroidered with silver.

"If your eminence is disguised, it will be more easy."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, breathing more freely.

"But it will be necessary for your eminence to do what the other day you declared you should have done in our place—cry 'Down with Mazarin!'"

"I will cry it."

"In French—in good French, my lord—take care of your accent; they killed six thousand Angerines in Sicily, because they pronounced Italian badly. Take care that the French do not take their revenge on you for the Sicilian vespers."

"I will do my best."

"The streets are full of armed men," continued D'Artagnan. "Are you sure that no one is aware of the queen's project?"

Mazarin reflected.

"This affair would give a fine opportunity for a traitor, my lord; the chance of being attacked would be an excuse for everything."

Mazarin shuddered; but he reflected that a man who had an intention to betray would not warn first.

"And, therefore," added he quietly, "I have not confidence in every one; the proof of which is, that I have fixed upon you to escort me."

"Shall you not go with the queen?"

"No," replied Mazarin.

"Then you will start after the queen?"

"No," said Mazarin again.

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, who began to understand.

"Yes," continued the cardinal. "I have my plan: with the queen, I double her risk—after the queen, her departure would double mine—then, the court once safe, I might be forgotten; the great are often ungrateful."

"Very true," said D'Artagnan, fixing his eyes, in spite of himself, on the queen's diamond, which Mazarin wore on his finger. Mazarin followed the direction of his eyes, and gently turned the hoop of the ring inside.

"I wish," he said, with his cunning smile, "to prevent them from being ungrateful to me."

"It is but Christian charity," replied D'Artagnan, "not to lead one's neighbors into temptation."

"It is exactly for that reason," said Mazarin, "that I wish to start before them."

D'Artagnan smiled—he was quite the man to understand the astute Italian. Mazarin saw the smile, and profited by the moment.

"You will begin, therefore, by taking me first out of Paris, will you not, my dear Monson d'Artagnan?"

"A difficult commission, my lord," replied D'Artagnan, resuming his serious manner.

"But," said Mazarin, "you did not make so many difficulties with regard to the king and queen."

"The king and the queen are my king and queen, my lord," replied the musketeer, "my life is theirs, and I ought to give it for them. They ask it; and I have nothing to say."

"That is true," murmured Mazarin, in a low tone, "but as thy life is not mine, I suppose I must buy it, must I not?" and sighing deeply, he began to turn the hoop of his ring outside again. D'Artagnan smiled. These two men met at one point, and that was, cunning; had they been actuated alike by courage, the one would have done great things for the other.

"But also," said Mazarin, "you must understand that if I ask this service from you it is with the intention of being grateful."

"Is it still only in intention, my lord?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Stay," said Mazarin, drawing the ring from his finger, "my dear Monsieur de Artagnan—here is a diamond which belonged to you formerly, it is but just that it should return to you—take it, I pray."

D'Artagnan spared Mazarin the trouble of insisting, and after looking to see if the stone were the same, and assuring himself of the purity of its water, he took it, and passed it on to his finger with indescribable pleasure.

"I valued it much," said Mazarin, giving a last look at it; "nevertheless I give it to you with great pleasure."

"And I, my lord," said D'Artagnan, "accept it as it is

given. Come, let us speak of your little affairs. You wish to leave before everybody, and at what hour?"

"At ten o'clock."

"And the queen, at what time does she wish to start?"

"At midnight."

"Then it is possible. I can get you out of Paris and leave you beyond the 'barrière,' and can return for her."

"Capital, but how will you get me out of Paris?"

"Oh! as to that, you must leave it to me."

"I give you full power, therefore take as large an escort as you like."

D'Artagnan shook his head.

"It seems to me, however," said Mazarin, "the safest method."

"Yes, for you, my lord, but not for the queen; you must leave it to me, and give me the entire direction of the undertaking."

"Nevertheless——"

"Or find some one else," continued D'Artagnan, turning his back.

"Oh!" muttered Mazarin; "I do believe he is going off with the diamond!"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan," he called out in a coaxing voice, "will you answer for everything?"

"I will answer for nothing, I will do my best."

"Well, then, let us go, I must trust to you."

"It is very fortunate," said D'Artagnan to himself.

"You will be here at half-past nine?"

"And I shall find your eminence ready?"

"Certainly, quite ready."

"Well, then, it is a settled thing; and now, my lord, will you obtain for me an audience of the queen?"

"For what purpose?"

"I wish to receive her majesty's commands from her own lips."

"She desired me to give them to you."

"She may have forgotten something."

"You really wish to see her?"

"It is indispensable, my lord."

Mazarin hesitated for one instant, while D'Artagnan remained firm.

"Come, then," said the minister; "I will conduct you to her—but remember, not one word of our conversation."

"What has passed between us concerns us alone, my lord," replied D'Artagnan.

"Swear to be mute."

"I never swear, my lord, I say yes or no; and, as I am a gentleman, I keep my word."

"Come, then, I see that I must trust unreservedly to you."

"Believe me, my lord, it will be your best plan."

"Come," said Mazarin, conducting D'Artagnan into the queen's oratory, and desiring him to wait there. He did not wait long, for in five minutes the queen entered in full gala costume. Thus dressed, she scarcely appeared thirty-five years of age, and was still handsome.

"It is you, Monsieur d'Artagnan," she said, smiling graciously, "I thank you for having insisted on seeing me."

"I ought to ask your majesty's pardon; but I wished to receive your commands from your own mouth."

"Will you accept the commission which I have entrusted to you?"

"With gratitude."

"Very well, be here at midnight."

"I will not fail."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," continued the queen, "I know your disinterestedness too well to speak of my gratitude at this moment; but I swear to you that I shall not forget this second service as I forgot the first."

"Your majesty is free to forget or to remember as it pleases you; and I know not what you mean," said D'Artagnan, bowing.

"Go, sir," said the queen, with her most bewitching smile, "go and return at midnight."

And D'Artagnan retired, but as he passed out he glanced at the curtain through which the queen had entered, and at the bottom of the tapestry he remarked the tip of a velvet slipper.

"Good," thought he; "Mazarin has been listening to discover whether I had betrayed him. In truth, that Italian puppet does not deserve the services of an honest man."

D'Artagnan was not less exact to his appointment, and at half-past nine o'clock he entered the anteroom.

He found the cardinal dressed as an officer, and he looked very well in that costume, which, as we have already said, he wore elegantly—only he was very pale, and trembled a little.

"Quite alone?" he asked.

"Yes, my lord."

"And that worthy Monsieur de Valon, are we to enjoy his society?"

"Certainly, my lord, he is waiting in his carriage at the gate of the garden of the Palais Royal."

"And we start in his carriage then."

"Yes, my lord."

"And with no other escort but you two?"

"Is it not enough? One of us would suffice."

"Really, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the cardinal, "your coolness startles me."

"I should have thought, on the contrary, that it ought to have inspired you with confidence."

"And Bernouin, do I not take him with me?"

"There is no room for him; he will rejoin your eminence."

"Let us go," said Mazarin, "since everything must be ready—do you wish it?"

"My lord, there is time to draw back," said D'Artagnan, "and your eminence is perfectly free."

"Not at all, not at all," said Mazarin; "let us be off."

And they both descended the private stair, Mazarin leaning on the arm of D'Artagnan, an arm which the musketeer felt trembling upon his own. At last, after crossing the courts of the Palais Royal, where there still remained some of the conveyances of late guests, they entered the garden and reached the little gate. Mazarin attempted to open it by a key which he took from his pocket, but his hand trembled so much that he could not find the keyhole.

"Give it to me," said D'Artagnan, who, when the gate was opened, deposited the key in his pocket, reckoning upon returning by that means.

The steps were already down, and the door open. Mousqueton held open the door, and Porthos was inside the carriage.

"Mount, my lord," said D'Artagnan to Mazarin, who sprang into the carriage without waiting for a second bidding. D'Artagnan followed him; and Mousqueton, having closed the door, mounted behind the carriage with many groans. He had made some difficulties about going, under pretext that he still suffered from his wound, but D'Artagnan had said to him:

"Remain if you like, my dear Monsieur Mouston, but I warn you that Paris will be burned down to-night;" upon which Mousqueton had declared, without asking anything further, that he was ready to follow his master and Monsieur D'Artagnan to the end of the world.

The carriage started at a measured pace, without betraying

in the least that it contained people in a hurry. The cardinal wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and looked around him. On his left was Porthos, while D'Artagnan was on his right; each guarded a door, and served as a rampart to him on either side. Before him, on the front seat, lay two pairs of pistols—one before Porthos, and the other before D'Artagnan. About a hundred paces from the Palais Royal a patrol stopped the carriage.

"Who goes?" asked the captain.

"Mazarin!" replied D'Artagnan, bursting into a laugh. The cardinal's hair stood on end. But the joke appeared excellent to the citizens, who, seeing the conveyance without escort and unarmed, would never have believed in the reality of so great an imprudence.

"A good journey to ye!" they cried, allowing it to pass.

"Hem!" said D'Artagnan, "what does my lord think of that reply?"

"Man of talent!" cried Mazarin.

"In truth," said Porthos, "I understand; but now——"

About the middle of the Rue des Petits-Champs they were stopped by a second patrol.

"Who goes there?" inquired the captain of the patrol.

"Keep back, my lord," said D'Artagnan. And Mazarin buried himself so far behind the two friends that he disappeared, completely hidden between them.

"Who goes there?" cried the same voice, impatiently, while D'Artagnan perceived that they had rushed to the horses' heads. But, putting his head half out of the carriage—

"Eh! Planchet," said he.

The chief approached, and it was indeed Planchet; D'Artagnan had recognized the voice of his old servant.

"How, sir!" said Planchet, "is it you?"

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* yes, my good friend, this worthy Porthos has just received a sword wound, and I am taking him to his country house at St. Cloud."

"Oh! really," said Planchet.

"Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "if you can still speak, say a word, my dear Porthos, to this good Planchet."

"Planchet, my friend," said Porthos, in a melancholy voice, "I am very ill; should you meet a doctor, you will do me a favor by sending him to me."

"Oh! good heaven," said Planchet, "what a misfortune; and how did it happen?"

"I will tell you all about it," replied Mousqueton.

Porthos uttered a deep groan.

"Make way for us, Planchet," said D'Artagnan in a whisper to him, "or he will not arrive alive; the lungs are attacked, my friend."

Planchet shook his head with the air of a man who says: "In that case, things look ill." Then he exclaimed, turning to his men, "Let them pass, they are friends."

The carriage resumed its course, and Mazarin, who had held his breath, ventured to breathe again.

"*Bricconi!*" muttered he.

A few steps in advance of the gate of St. Honoré, they met a third troop; this latter party was composed of ill-looking fellows, who resembled bandits more than anything else; they were the men of the beggar of St. Eustache.

"Attention, Porthos!" cried D'Artagnan. Porthos placed his hand on the pistols.

"What is it?" asked Mazarin.

"My lord, I think we are in bad company."

A man advanced to the door with a kind of scythe in his hand.

"Eh, rascal!" said D'Artagnan, "do you not know his highness the prince's carriage?"

"Prince or not," said the man, "open; we are here to guard the gate, and no one whom we do not know shall pass."

"What is to be done?" said Porthos.

"*Pardieu!* to pass," replied D'Artagnan.

"But how pass?" asked Mazarin.

"Through or over; coachman, gallop on."

"Not a step further," said the man, who appeared to be the captain, "or I will hamstring your horses."

"*Peste!*" said Porthos, "it would be a pity; animals which cost me a hundred pistoles each."

"I will pay you two hundred for them," said Mazarin.

"Yes, but when once they are hamstrung, our necks will be strung next."

"If one of them comes to my side," asked Porthos, "must I kill him?"

"Yes, by a blow of your fist, if you can; we will not fire but at the last extremity."

"I can do it," said Porthos.

"Come and open then," cried D'Artagnan to the man with the scythe, taking one of the pistols up by the muzzle, and preparing to strike with the handle. And as the man approached, D'Artagnan, in order to have more freedom for his actions, leaned half out of the door; his eyes were fixed upon those of the mendicant, which were lighted up by a

lantern. Doubtless he recognized D'Artagnan, for he became deadly pale; doubtless, the musketeer knew him, for his hair stood up on his head.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" he cried, falling back a step, "Monsieur d'Artagnan! let him pass."

D'Artagnan was, perhaps, about to reply, when a blow similar to that of a mallet falling on the head of an ox was heard; it was Porthos, who had just knocked down his man.

D'Artagnan turned round and saw the unfortunate man writhing about four steps off.

"S'death!" cried he to the coachman. "Spur your horses! whip! get on!"

The coachman bestowed a heavy blow of the whip upon his horses; the noble animals reared, then cries of men who were knocked down were heard; then a double concussion was felt, and two of the wheels had passed over a round and flexible body. There was a moment's silence; the carriage had cleared the gate.

"To Cours la Reine!" cried D'Artagnan to the coachman; then turning to Mazarin, he said, "Now, my lord, you can say five *paters* and five *aves*, to thank heaven for your deliverance. You are safe, you are free."

Mazarin replied only by a groan; he could not believe in such a miracle. Five minutes later the carriage stopped, having reached Cours la Reine.

"Is my lord pleased with his escort?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Enchanted, *Monson*," said Mazarin, venturing his head out of one of the windows; "and now do as much for the queen."

"It will be less difficult," replied D'Artagnan, springing to the ground. "Monsieur de Valon, I commend his eminence to your care."

"Be quite at ease," said Porthos, holding out his hand, which D'Artagnan took and shook in his.

"Oh!" said Porthos.

D'Artagnan looked with surprise at his friend.

"What is the matter, then?" he asked.

"I think I have sprained the wrist," said Porthos.

"The devil! why you strike like a blind or a deaf man."

"It was necessary—my man was going to fire a pistol at me; but you—how did you get rid of yours?"

"Oh! mine," replied D'Artagnan, "was not a man."

"What was it, then?"

"It was an apparition."

"And——"

"I charmed it away."

Without further explanation, D'Artagnan took the pistols which were upon the front seat, and placed them in his belt, wrapped himself in his cloak, and, not wishing to enter by the same gate as that by which they had left, he took his way toward the Richelieu gate.

CHAPTER L.

THE CARRIAGE OF MONSIEUR LE COADJUTEUR.

INSTEAD of returning, then, by the St. Honoré gate, D'Artagnan, who had time before him, walked round and re-entered by the Porte Richelieu. He was approached to be examined; and when it was discovered by his plumed hat and his laced coat that he was an officer of the musketeers, he was surrounded, with an intention to make him cry "Down with Mazarin!" Their first demonstration did not fail to make him uneasy at first; but when he knew what it concerned, he shouted in such a fine voice that even the most exacting were satisfied. He walked down the Rue Richelieu, meditating how he should carry off the queen in her turn—for to take her in a carriage bearing the arms of France was not to be thought of—when he perceived an equipage standing at the door of the hotel belonging to Madame de Guéménée.

He was struck by a sudden idea.

"Ah, *pardieu!*" he exclaimed; "that would be fair play.

And approaching the carriage, he examined the arms on the panels, and the livery of the coachman on his box. This scrutiny was so much the more easy, the coachman being asleep with the reins in his hands.

"It is, in truth, Monsieur le Coadjuteur's carriage," said D'Artagnan; "upon my honor I begin to think that heaven is prospering us."

He mounted noiselessly into the chariot, and pulled the silk cord which was attached to the coachman's little finger.

"To the Palais Royal," he called out.

The coachman awoke with a start, and drove off in the direction he was desired, never doubting but that the order had come from his master. The porter at the palace was about to close the gates, but seeing such a handsome equipage, he fancied that it was some visit of importance, and the carriage was allowed to pass, and to stop under the porch. It was then only that the coachman perceived that the grooms

were not behind the vehicle; he fancied Monsieur le Coadjuteur had sent them back, and without leaving the reins he sprang from his box to open the door. D'Artagnan sprang in his turn to the ground, and just at the moment when the coachman, alarmed at not seeing his master, fell back a step, he seized him by his collar with the left, while with the right he placed a pistol to his throat.

"Try to pronounce one single word," muttered D'Artagnan, "and you are a dead man."

The coachman perceived at once, by the expression in the countenance of the man who thus addressed him, that he had fallen into a trap, and he remained with his mouth wide open and his eyes immoderately starting.

Two musketeers were pacing the court, to whom D'Artagnan called by their names.

"Monsieur Bellière," said he to one of them, "do me the favor to take the reins from the hands of this worthy man, to mount upon the box, and to drive to the door of the private stair, and to wait for me there; it is on an affair of importance which is for the service of the king."

The musketeer, who knew that his lieutenant was incapable of jesting with regard to the service, obeyed without saying a word, although he thought the order strange. Then turning toward the second musketeer, D'Artagnan said:

"Monsieur de Verger, help me to place this man in a place of safety."

The musketeer, thinking that his lieutenant had just arrested some prince in disguise, bowed, and drawing his sword, signified that he was ready. D'Artagnan mounted the staircase, followed by his prisoner, who in his turn was followed by the soldier, and entered Mazarin's anteroom. Bernouin was waiting there, impatient for news of his master.

"Well, sir?" he said.

"Everything goes on capitally, my dear Monsieur Bernouin, but here is a man whom I must beg you to put in a safe place."

"Where, then, sir?"

"Where you like, provided that the place which you shall choose has shutters secured by padlocks and a door which can be locked."

"We have that, sir," replied Bernouin; and the poor coachman was conducted to a closet, the windows of which were barred, and which looked very much like a prison.

"And now, my good friend," said D'Artagnan to him, "I must invite you to deprive yourself, for my sake, of your hat and cloak."

The coachman, as we can well understand, made no resistance; in fact, he was so astonished at what had happened to him that he stammered and reeled like a drunken man. D'Artagnan deposited his clothes under the arm of one of the *valets*:

"And now, Monsieur Verger," he said, "shut yourself up with this man until Monsieur Bernouin returns to open the door. Your office will be tolerably long and not very amusing, I know; but," added he seriously, "you understand, it is on the king's service."

"At your command, lieutenant," replied the musketeer, who saw that the business was a serious one.

"By the by," continued D'Artagnan, "should this man attempt to fly or to call out, pass your sword through his body."

The musketeer signified by a nod that the commands should be obeyed to the letter, and D'Artagnan went out, followed by Bernouin: midnight struck.

"Lead me into the queen's oratory," said D'Artagnan, "announce to her I am there, and put this parcel, with a well-loaded musket, under the seat of the carriage which is waiting at the foot of the private stair."

Bernouin conducted D'Artagnan to the oratory, where he sat down pensively. Everything had gone on as usual at the Palais Royal. As we said before, at ten o'clock almost all the guests were dispersed; those who were to fly with the court had the word of command, and they were each severally desired to be from twelve o'clock to one at Cours la Reine.

At ten o'clock Anne of Austria had entered the king's room. *Monsieur* had just retired, and the youthful Louis remaining the last, was amusing himself by placing some lead soldiers in a line of battle, a game which delighted him much. Two royal pages were playing with him.

"Laporte," said the queen, "it is time for his majesty to go to bed."

The king asked to remain up, having, he said, no wish to sleep; but the queen was firm.

"Are you not going to-morrow morning at six o'clock, Louis, to bathe at Conflans? I think you asked to do so yourself."

"You are right, madame," said the king, "and I am ready to retire to my room when you have kissed me. Laporte, give the light to Monsieur the Chevalier de Coislin."

The queen touched with her lips the white, smooth brow

which the royal child presented to her with the gravity which already partook of etiquette.

"Go to sleep soon, Louis," said the queen, "for you must be woke very early."

"I will do my best to obey you, madame," said the youthful king, "but I have no inclination to sleep."

"Laporte," said Anne of Austria, in an undertone, "find some very dull book to read to his majesty, but do not undress yourself."

The king went out, accompanied by the Chevalier de Coislin bearing the candlestick, and then the queen returned to her own apartment. Her ladies—that is to say, Madame de Brey, Mademoiselle de Beaumont, Madame de Motteville, and Socraytine, her sister, so called on account of her sense, had just brought into her dressing-room the remains of the dinner, upon which, according to her usual custom, she supped. The queen then gave her orders, spoke of a banquet which the Marquis de Villequier was to give to her on the day after the morrow, indicated the persons whom she should admit to the honor of being at it, announced another visit on the following day to Val-de-Grace, where she intended to pay her devotions, and gave her commands to her senior valet to accompany her. When the ladies had finished their supper, the queen feigned extreme fatigue, and passed into her bedroom. Madame de Motteville, who was on especial duty that evening, followed to aid and undress her. The queen then began to read, and, after conversing with her affectionately for a few minutes, dismissed her.

It was at this moment that D'Artagnan entered with the coadjutor's carriage into the courtyard of the palace, and a few seconds later the carriage of the ladies in waiting drove out, and the gates were shut after them.

A few minutes after twelve o'clock Bernouin knocked at the queen's bedroom door, having come by the cardinal's secret corridor. Anne of Austria opened the door herself. She was undressed—that is to say, she had drawn on her stockings again, and was wrapped in a long dressing-gown.

"It is you, Bernouin," she said. "Is Monsieur d'Artagnan there?"

"Yes, madame, in your oratory; he is waiting till your majesty be ready."

"I am. Go and tell Laporte to wake and dress the king, and then pass on to the Maréchal de Villeroy and summon him to me."

Bernouin bowed and retired.

The queen entered her oratory, which was lighted by a single lamp of Venetian crystal. She saw D'Artagnan, who stood expecting her.

"Is it you?" she said.

"Yes, madame."

"Are you ready?"

"I am."

"And his eminence, the cardinal."

"Has got off without any accident. He is awaiting your majesty at Cours la Reine."

"But in what carriage do we start."

"I have provided for everything—a carriage is waiting below for your majesty."

"Let us go to the king."

D'Artagnan bowed, and followed the queen. The young Louis was already dressed, with the exception of his shoes and doublet; he had allowed himself to be dressed in great astonishment, overwhelming with questions Laporte, who replied only in these words: "Sire, it is by the queen's commands."

The bed was open, and the sheets were so worn that holes could be seen in some places—another evidence of the stinginess of Mazarin.

The queen entered, and D'Artagnan remained at the door. As soon as the child perceived the queen he escaped from Laporte, and ran to meet her. Anne then motioned to D'Artagnan to approach, and he obeyed.

"My son," said Anne of Austria, pointing to the musketeer, calm, standing uncovered, "here is Monsieur d'Artagnan, who is as brave as one of those ancient heroes of whom you like so much to hear from my women. Remember his name well, and look at him well, that his face may not be forgotten, for this evening he is going to render us a great service."

The young king looked at the officer with his large formed eye, and repeated:

"Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"That is it, my son."

The young king slowly raised his little hand, and held it out to the musketeer; the latter bent on his knee, and kissed it.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," repeated Louis; "very well, madame."

At this moment they were startled by a noise as if a tumult were approaching.

"What is that?" exclaimed the queen.

"Oh, oh!" replied D'Artagnan, straining both at the same time his quick ear and his intelligent glance, "it is the sound of the people revolting."

"We must fly," said the queen.

"Your majesty has given me the control of this business; we must wait and see what they want."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"I will answer for everything."

Nothing is so catching as confidence. The queen, full of strength and courage, was quickly alive to these two virtues in others.

"Do as you like," she said, "I rely upon you."

"Will your majesty permit me to give orders in your name in this whole business?"

"Command, sir."

"What do the people want again?" asked the king.

"We are about to know, sire," replied D'Artagnan, as he rapidly left the room.

The tumult continued to increase, and seemed to surround the Palais Royal entirely. Cries were heard from the interior, of which they could not comprehend the sense. It was evident that there was clamor and sedition.

The king, half-dressed, the queen and Laporte, remained each in the same state, and almost in the same place, where they were listening and waiting. Comminges, who was on guard that night at the Palais Royal, ran in. He had about two hundred men in the courtyards and stables, and he placed them at the queen's disposal.

"Well," asked Anne of Austria, when D'Artagnan reappeared, "what is it?"

"It is, madame, that the report has spread that the queen has left the Palais Royal, carrying off the king, and the people ask to have proof to the contrary, or threaten to demolish the Palais Royal."

"Oh, this time it is too much," exclaimed the queen, "and I will prove to them that I have not left."

D'Artagnan saw from the expression of the queen's face that she was about to issue some violent command. He approached her, and said, in a low voice:

"Has your majesty still confidence in me?"

This voice startled her. "Yes, sir," she replied, "every confidence—speak."

"Will the queen deign to follow my advice?"

"Speak."

"Let your majesty dismiss M. de Comminges, and desire him to shut himself up with his men, in the guardhouse and in the stables."

Comminges glanced at D'Artagnan, with the envious look with which every courtier sees a new favorite spring up.

"You hear, Comminges?" said the queen.

D'Artagnan went up to him; with his usual quickness he had caught the anxious glance.

"Monsieur de Comminges," he said, "pardon me; we are both the queen's servants, are we not? it is my turn to be of use to her; do not envy me this happiness."

Comminges bowed and left.

"Come," said D'Artagnan to himself, "that is one more enemy for me there."

"And now," said the queen, addressing D'Artagnan, "what is to be done? for you hear that, instead of becoming calmer, the noise increases."

"Madame," said D'Artagnan, "the people want to see the king, and they must see him."

"How! they must see him! where, on the balcony?"

"Not at all, madame, but here, sleeping in his bed."

"Oh, your majesty," exclaimed Laporte, "Monsieur D'Artagnan is right."

The queen became thoughtful, and smiled, like a woman to whom duplicity is no stranger.

"Without doubt," she murmured.

"Monsieur Laporte," said D'Artagnan, "go and announce to the people through the grating that they are going to be satisfied, and that in five minutes they shall not only see the king, but they shall see him in bed; and that the king sleeps, and that the queen begs that they will keep silence, so as not to awaken him."

"But not every one; a deputation of two or four people."

"Every one, madame."

"But reflect, they will keep us here till daybreak."

"It shall take but a quarter of an hour. I answer for everything, madame; believe me, I know the people—they are like a great child, who only wants humoring. Before the sleeping king, they will be mute, gentle, and timid as lambs."

"Go, Laporte," said the queen.

The young king approached his mother and said: "Why do as those people ask?"

"It must be so, my son," said Anne of Austria.

"But then, if they say 'it must be' to me, am I no longer king?"

The queen remained silent.

"Sire," said D'Artagnan, "will your majesty permit me to ask you a question?"

Louis XIV. turned round, astonished that any one should dare to address him. But the queen pressed the child's hand.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Does your majesty remember when playing in the park of Fontainebleau, or in the palace-courts at Versailles, to have seen the sky suddenly become dark, and have heard the sound of thunder?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, this noise of thunder, however much your majesty may have wished to play on, has said: 'Go in, sire.' You must do so."

"Certainly, sir; but they tell me that the noise of thunder is the voice of God."

"Well, then, sire," continued D'Artagnan, "listen to the noise of the people, and you will see that it resembles that of thunder."

In truth, at that moment a terrible murmur was wafted to them by the night breeze; then all at once it ceased.

"Hold, sire," said D'Artagnan, "they have just told the people that you are asleep; you see that you are still king."

The queen looked with surprise at this strange man, whose brilliant courage made him the equal of the bravest, and who was, by his fine and ready intelligence, the equal of all.

Laporte entered.

"Well, Laporte," asked the queen.

"Madame," he replied, "Monsieur d'Artagnan's prediction has been accomplished; they were calmed as if by enchantment. The doors are about to be opened, and in five minutes they will be here."

"Laporte," said the queen, "suppose you put one of your sons in the king's place; we might be off during the time."

"If your majesty desires it," said Laporte, "my sons, like myself, are at the queen's service."

"Not at all," said D'Artagnan; "for should one of them know his majesty, and find out the substitute, all would be lost."

"You are right, sir—always right," said Anne of Austria.

"Laporte, place the king in the bed."

Laporte placed the king, dressed as he was, in the bed, and then covered him as far as the shoulders with the sheet. The queen bent over him, and kissed his brow.

"Pretend to sleep, Louis," said she.

"Yes," said the king, "but I wish not to be touched by one of those men."

"Sire, I am here," said D'Artagnan, "and I give you my word that if a single man has the audacity, his life shall pay for it."

"And now what is to be done?" asked the queen, "for I hear them."

"Monsieur Laporte, go to them, and again recommend silence. Madame, wait at the door, while I shall be at the head of the king's bed, ready to die for him."

Laporte went out; the queen remained standing near the hangings, while D'Artagnan glided behind the curtains.

Then the heavy and collected steps of a multitude of men were heard, and the queen herself raised the tapestry hangings, and put her finger on her lips.

On seeing the queen, the men stopped short, respectfully.

"Enter, gentlemen; enter," said the queen.

There was then among that crowd a moment's hesitation, which looked like shame. They had expected resistance—they had expected to be thwarted—to have to force the gates, and to overturn the guards. The gates had opened of themselves; and the king, ostensibly at least, had no other guard at his bed-head, but his mother. The foremost of them stammered, and attempted to fall back.

"Enter then, gentlemen," said Laporte, "since the queen permits you to do so."

Then, one more bold than the rest, ventured to pass the door, and to advance on tiptoe. This example was imitated by the rest, until the room filled silently, as if these men had been the most humble and devoted courtiers. Far beyond the door, the heads of those who were not able to enter could be seen, all rising on the tips of their feet.

D'Artagnan saw it all through an opening that he had made in the curtain, and in the first man who had entered he had recognized Planchet.

"Sir," said the queen to him, thinking that he was the leader of the band, "you wish to see the king, and therefore I determined to show him to you myself. Approach, and look at him, and say if we have the appearance of people who wish to escape."

"No, certainly," replied Planchet, rather astonished at the unexpected honor conferred upon him.

"You will say, then, to my good and faithful Parisians," continued Anne, with a smile, the expression of which did not deceive D'Artagnan, "that you have seen the king in bed and asleep, and the queen also ready to retire."

"I shall tell them, madame, and those who accompany me will say the same thing, but——"

"But what?" asked Anne of Austria.

"May your majesty pardon me," said Planchet; "but is it really the king who is lying there?"

Anne of Austria started. "If," she said, "there is one among you who knows the king, let him approach, and say whether it is really his majesty lying there."

A man, wrapped in a cloak, in the folds of which his face was hidden, approached, and leaned over the bed and looked.

For one second D'Artagnan thought the man had some evil design, and he put his hand to his sword; but in the movement made by the man in stooping, a portion of his face was uncovered, and D'Artagnan recognized the coadjutor.

"It is certainly the king," said the man, rising again. "God bless his majesty!"

"Yes," repeated the leader in a whisper, "God bless his majesty!" and all these men who had entered furious, passed from anger to pity, and blessed the royal infant in their turn.

"Now," said Planchet, "let us thank the queen. My friends, retire."

They all bowed, and retired by degrees, as noiselessly as they had entered. Planchet, who had been the first to enter, was the last to leave. The queen stopped him.

"What is your name, my friend?" she said.

Planchet, much surprised at the inquiry, turned back.

"Yes," continued the queen, "I think myself as much honored to have received you this evening as if you had been a prince, and I wish to know your name."

"Yes," thought Planchet, "to treat me as a prince. No, thank you."

D'Artagnan trembled lest Planchet, seduced like the crow in the fable, should say his name, and that the queen, knowing his name, would discover that Planchet had belonged to him.

"Madame," replied Planchet respectfully, "I am called Dulaurier, at your service."

"Thank you, Monsieur Dulaurier," said the queen, "and what is your business?"

"Madame, I am a clothier in the Rue Bourdonnais."

"That is all that I wished to know," said the queen.

"Much obliged to you, Monsieur Dulaurier. You will hear again from me."

"Come, come," thought D'Artagnan, emerging from behind the curtain; "decidedly Monsieur Planchet is no fool, and it is evident he has been brought up in a good school."

The different actors in this strange scene remained facing one another, without uttering a single word; the queen standing near the door—D'Artagnan half out of his hiding place—the king raised on his elbow, ready to fall down on his bed again at the slightest sound which should indicate the return of the multitude; but instead of approaching, the noise became more and more distant, and finished by dying away entirely.

The queen breathed more freely. D'Artagnan wiped his damp forehead, and the king slid off his bed, saying—"Let us go."

At this moment Laporte reappeared.

"Well?" asked the queen.

"Well, madame!" replied the valet; "I followed them as far as the gates. They announced to all their comrades that they had seen the king, and that the queen had spoken to them; and, in fact, they have gone off quite proud and happy."

"Oh, the miserable wretches!" murmured the queen, "they shall pay dearly for their boldness, and it is I who promise it to them."

Then turning to D'Artagnan she said:

"Sir, you have given me this evening the best advice that I have ever received. Continue, and say what we must do now."

"Monsieur Laporte," said D'Artagnan, "finish dressing his majesty."

"We may go then?" asked the queen.

"When your majesty pleases. You have only to descend by the private stairs, and you will find me at the door."

"Go, sir," said the queen; "I will follow you."

D'Artagnan went down, and found the carriage at its post, and the musketeer on the box. D'Artagnan took out the parcel, which he had desired Bernouin to place under the seat. It may be remembered that it was the hat and cloak belonging to Monsieur de Gondy's coachman.

He placed the cloak on his shoulders, and the hat on his head, while the musketeer got off the box.

"Sir," said D'Artagnan, "You will go and release your companion, who is guarding the coachman. You must mount your horse, and proceed to Rue Tiquetonne, Hotel de la Chevrette, whence you will take my horse, and that of Monsieur de Valon, which you must saddle and equip as if for war, and then you will leave Paris, bringing them with you to Cours la Reine. If, when you arrive at Cours la Reine, you find no one, you must go on to St. Germain. On the king's service."

The musketeer touched his cap, and went away to execute the orders he had received.

D'Artagnan mounted on the box, having a pair of pistols in his belt, a musket under his feet, and a naked sword behind him.

The queen appeared, and was followed by the king and the Duke d'Anjou, his brother.

"Monsieur the coadjutor's carriage!" she exclaimed, falling back.

"Yes, madame," said D'Artagnan; "but get in fearlessly, for I drive you."

The queen uttered a cry of surprise, and entered the carriage, and the king and monsieur took their places at her side.

"Come, Laporte," said the queen.

"How, madame," said the valet, "in the same carriage as your majesties."

"It is not a matter of royal etiquette this evening, but of the king's safety. Get in, Laporte."

Laporte obeyed.

"Pull down the blinds," said D'Artagnan.

"But will that not excite suspicion, sir?" asked the queen.

"Your majesty's mind may be quite at ease," replied the officer. "I have my answer ready."

The blinds were pulled down, and they started at a gallop by the Rue Richelieu. On reaching the gate, the captain of the post advanced at the head of some ten men, holding a lantern in his hand.

D'Artagnan signed to them to draw near.

"Do you recognize the carriage?" he asked the sergeant.

"No," replied the latter.

"Look at the arms."

The sergeant put the lantern near the panel.

"They are those of Monsieur le Coadjuteur," he said.

"Hush; he is enjoying a ride with Madame de Guéménée."

The sergeant began to laugh.

"Open the gate," he cried, "I know who it is!" Then putting his face to the lowered blinds, he said:

"I wish you joy, my lord!"

"Impudent fellow," cried D'Artagnan, "you will get me turned off."

The gate groaned on its hinges, and D'Artagnan, seeing the way cleared, whipped on his horses, who started at a canter, and five minutes later they had rejoined the cardinal.

"Mousqueton!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "draw up the blinds of his majesty's carriage."

"It is he!" cried Porthos.

"As a coachman!" exclaimed Mazarin.

"And with the coadjutor's carriage!" said the queen.

"Corpo di Dio! Monson d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, "you are worth your weight in gold."

CHAPTER LI.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN AND PORTHOS EARNED BY THE SALE OF STRAW THE ONE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETEEN AND THE OTHER TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN LOUIS D'OR.

MAZARIN was desirous of setting out instantly for St. Germain; but the queen declared that she should wait for the people whom she had appointed to meet her. However, she offered the cardinal, Laporte's place, which he accepted, and went from one carriage to the other.

It was without foundation that a report of the king's intending to leave Paris by night had been circulated. Ten or twelve persons had been in the secret since six o'clock, and how great soever their prudence might be, they could not issue the necessary orders for the departure without the thing transpiring a little. Besides, each individual had some one or two others interested in him; and as there could be no doubt but that the queen was leaving Paris full of terrible projects of vengeance, every one had warned parents and friends of what was going to happen; so that the news of the approaching exit ran like a train of lighted gunpowder through the streets.

The first carriage which arrived after that of the queen was that of the Prince de Condé, who, with the princess and dowager princess, was in it. Both these ladies had been awakened in the middle of the night, and did not know what it was all about. The second contained the Duke and Duchess of Orleans, the tall young Mademoiselle, and the Abbé de la Rivière; and the third, the Duke de Longueville and the Prince de Conti, brother and brother-in-law of Condé. They all alighted, and hastened to pay their respects to the king and queen in their coach. The queen fixed her eyes upon the carriage they had left, and seeing that it was empty, she said:

"But where is Madame de Longueville?"

"Ah, yes, where is my sister?" asked the prince.

"Madame de Longueville is ill," said the duke, "and she desired me to excuse her to your majesty."

Anne gave a quick glance at Mazarin, who replied by an almost imperceptible shake of his head.

"What do you say of this?" asked the queen.

"I say that she is an hostage for the Parisians," answered the cardinal.

"Why is she not come?" asked the prince in a low voice, addressing his brother.

"Silence," whispered the duke; "she has her reasons."

"She will ruin us!" returned the prince.

"She will save us," said Conti.

Carriages now arrived in crowds: those of the Maréchal de Villeroy, Guitant, Villequier, and Comminges came into the line. The two musketeers arrived in their turn, holding the horses of D'Artagnan and Porthos in their hands. These two instantly mounted; the coachman of the latter replacing D'Artagnan on the coach-box of the royal coach. Mousqueton took the place of the coachman, and drove standing—for reasons known to himself—like the Phaeton of antiquity.

The queen, though occupied by a thousand details, tried to catch the Gascon's eye; but he, with his wonted prudence, had mingled with the crowd.

"Let us be the avant-guard," said he to Porthos, "and find out good quarters at St. Germain; nobody will think of us, and for my part, I am much fatigued."

"As for me," replied Porthos, "I'm falling asleep, considering that we have not had any fighting; truly, the Parisians are idiots."

"Or rather, we are very clever," said D'Artagnan.

"Perhaps."

"And your wrist—how is it?"

"Better—but do you think that we've got them this time?"

"Got what?"

"You, your promotion—and I, my title."

"I faith! yes—I should expect so—besides, if they forget, I shall take the liberty of reminding them."

"The queen's voice! She is speaking," said Porthos; "I think she wants to ride on horseback."

"Oh, she would like it—she would—but——"

"But what?"

"The cardinal won't allow it. Gentlemen," he said, addressing the two musketeers, "accompany the royal carriage; we are going on to seek for lodgings."

"Let us depart, gentlemen," said the queen.

And the royal carriage drove on, followed by the other coaches and about fifty horsemen.

They reached St. Germain without any accident: on descending the footstep, the queen found the prince awaiting her, bareheaded; to offer her his hand.

"What an alarm for the Parisians!" said the queen.

"It is war," were the emphatic words of the prince.

"Well, then, let it be war! Have we not on our side the conquerer of Mocroy, of Nordlingen, of Lens?"

The prince bowed low.

It was then nine o'clock in the morning. The queen walked first into the château; every one followed her. About two hundred persons had accompanied her in her flight.

"Gentlemen," said the queen, laughing, "pray take up your abode in the château; it is large, and there will be no want of room for you all; but, as we never thought of coming here, I am informed that there are, in all, only three beds here, one for the king, one for me——"

"And one for the cardinal," muttered the prince.

"Am I—am I then to sleep on the floor?" asked Gaston D'Orleans, with a forced smile.

"No, my prince," replied Mazarin, "for the third bed is intended for your highness."

"But your eminence?" replied the prince.

"I"—answered Mazarin—"I shall not sleep at all; I shall have work to do."

Gaston desired that he should be shown into the room where he was to sleep, without in the least concerning himself as to where his wife and daughter were to repose.

"Well, for my part, I shall go to bed," said D'Artagnan; "come, Porthos."

Porthos followed the lieutenant with that profound confidence which he had in the wisdom of his friend. They walked from one end of the château to the other, Porthos looking with wondering eyes at D'Artagnan, who was counting on his fingers.

"Four hundred, at a pistole each—four hundred pistoles."

"Yes," interposed Porthos, "four hundred pistoles; but who is to make four hundred pistoles?"

"A pistole is not enough," said D'Artagnan, "'tis worth a louis."

"What is worth a louis?"

"Four hundred, at a louis each, make four hundred louis."

"Four hundred!" exclaimed Porthos.

"Listen!" cried D'Artagnan.

But, as there were all descriptions of people about, who were in a state of wonderment at the arrival of the court, which they were watching, he whispered in his friend's ear.

"I understand," answered Porthos, "I understand you perfectly, on my honor: two hundred louis, each of us, would be making a pretty thing of it; but what will people say?"

"Let them say what they will; besides, how will they know it's us."

"But who will distribute these things?" asked Porthos.

"I, and Mousqueton there."

"But he wears my livery; my livery will be known," replied Porthos.

"He can turn his coat inside out."

"You are always in the right, my dear friend," cried Porthos; "but where the devil do you discover all the notions you put into practice?"

D'Artagnan smiled. The two friends turned down the first street they came to. Porthos knocked at the door of a house to the right, while D'Artagnan knocked at the door of a house to the left.

"Some straw," they said.

"Sir, we don't keep any," was the reply of the people who opened the doors; "but ask, please, at the hay dealer's."

"Where is the hay-dealer's?"

"At the last large door in the street."

"Are there any other people in St. Germain who sell straw?"

"Yes; there's the landlord of the Lamb, and Gros-Louis, the farmer—they live in the Rue des Ursulines."

"Very well."

D'Artagnan went instantly to the hay dealer, and bargained with him for a hundred and fifty trusses of straw, which he had, at the rate of three pistoles each. He went afterward to the innkeeper, and bought from him two hundred trusses at the same price. Finally, Farmer Louis sold them eighty trusses, making in all four hundred and thirty.

There was no more to be had in St. Germain. This foraging did not occupy more than half an hour. Mousqueton, duly instructed, was put at the head of this sudden and new business. He was cautioned not to let a bit of straw out of his hands under a louis a truss, and they entrusted to him straw to the amount of four hundred and thirty louis. D'Artagnan, taking with him three trusses of straw, returned to the château, where everybody, freezing with cold, and falling asleep, envied the king, the queen, and the Duke of

Orleans, on their camp-beds. The lieutenant's entrance produced a burst of laughter in the great drawing-room; but he did not appear to notice that he was the object of general attention, but began to arrange with so much cleverness, nicety, and gayety, his straw bed, that the mouths of all these sleepy creatures, who could not go to sleep, began to water.

"Straw!" they all cried out, "straw! where is any to be found?"

"I can show you," answered the Gascon.

And he conducted them to Mousqueton, who distributed lavishly the trusses at a guinea apiece. It was thought rather dear, but people wanted to go to sleep, and who would not give even two or three louis for some hours of sound sleep?

Mousqueton, who knew nothing of what was going on in the château, wondered that the idea had not occurred to him sooner. D'Artagnan put the gold in his hat, and, in going back to the château, settled the reckoning with Porthos; each of them had cleared two hundred and fifteen louis.

Porthos, however, found that he had no straw left for himself. He returned to Mousqueton, but the steward had sold the last wisp. He then repaired to D'Artagnan, who, thanks to his four trusses of straw, was in the act of making up and of tasting, by anticipation, the luxury of a bed so soft, so well stuffed at the head, so well covered at the foot, that it would have excited the envy of the king himself, if his majesty had not been fast asleep in his own. D'Artagnan could, on no account, consent to pull his bed to pieces again for Porthos, but for a consideration of four lois that the latter paid him for it, he consented that Porthos should share his couch with him. He laid his sword at the head, his pistols by his side, stretched his cloak over his feet, placed his felt hat on the top of his cloak, and extended himself luxuriously on the straw, which rustled under him. He was already enjoying the sweet dreams engendered by the possession of two hundred and nineteen louis, made in a quarter of an hour, when a voice was heard at the door of the hall, which made him stir.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" it cried.

"Here!" cried Porthos, "here!"

Porthos foresaw that if D'Artagnan was called away he should remain sole possessor of the bed. An officer approached.

"I am come to fetch you, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"From whom?"

"His eminence sent me."

"Tell my lord that I'm going to sleep, and I advise him, as a friend, to do the same."

"His eminence is not gone to bed, and will not go to bed, and wants you instantly."

"The devil take Mazarin, who does not know when to sleep at the proper time. What does he want with me? Is it to make me a captain? In that case I forgive him."

And the musketeer rose, grumbling, took his sword, hat, pistols and cloak, and followed the officer, while Porthos, alone, and sole possessor of the bed, endeavored to follow the good example of falling asleep, which his predecessor had set him.

"Monsieur D'Artagnan," said the cardinal, on perceiving him, "I have not forgotten with what zeal you have served me. I am going to prove to you that I have not."

"Good," thought the Gascon, "this begins well."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," he resumed, "do you wish to become a captain?"

"Yes, my lord."

"And your friend still wishes to be made a baron?"

"At this very moment, my lord, he's dreaming that he is one."

"Then," said Mazarin, taking from his portfolio the letter which he had already shown D'Artagnan, "take this dispatch, and carry it to England."

D'Artagnan looked at the envelope, there was no address on it.

"Am I not to know to whom to present it?"

"You will know when you reach London: at London you may tear off the outer envelope."

"And what are my instructions?"

"To obey, in every particular, him to whom this letter is addressed. You must set out for Boulogne. At the 'Royal Arms of England' you will find a young gentleman, named Mordaunt."

"Yes, my lord; and what am I to do with this young gentleman?"

"To follow wherever he leads you."

D'Artagnan looked at the cardinal with a stupefied air.

"There are your instructions," said Mazarin; "go!"

"Go! 'tis easy to say so, but that requires money, and I haven't any."

"Ah!" replied Mazarin, "so you've no money?"

"None, my lord."

"But the diamond I gave you yesterday?"

"I wish to keep it in remembrance of your eminence."

Mazarin sighed.

"'Tis very dear living in England, my lord, especially as envoy extraordinary."

"Zounds!" replied Mazarin, "the people there are very sedate, and their habits, since the revolution, simple; but no matter."

He opened a drawer, and took out a purse.

"What do you say to a thousand crowns?"

D'Artagnan pouted out his lower lip in a most extraordinary manner.

"I reply, my lord, 'tis but little, as certainly I shall not go alone."

"I suppose not. Monsieur de Valon, that worthy gentleman, for, with the exception of yourself, Monson d'Artagnan, there's not a man in France that I esteem and love so much as him——"

"Then, my lord," replied D'Artagnan, pointing to the purse which Mazarin still held, "if you love and esteem him so much, you—understand me?"

"Be it so! on his account I add two hundred crowns."

"Scoundrell!" muttered D'Artagnan—"but on our return," he said aloud, "may we, that is, my friend and I, depend on having, he his barony, and I my promotion?"

"On the honor of Mazarin."

"I should like another sort of oath better," said D'Artagnan to himself—then aloud, "May I not offer my duty to her majesty the queen?"

"Her majesty is asleep, and you must set off directly," replied Mazarin, "go, pray, sir——"

"One word more, my lord; if there's any fighting where I'm going, ought I to fight?"

"You are to obey the commands of the personage to whom I have addressed the enclosed letter."

"'Tis well," said D'Artagnan, holding out his hand to receive the money. "I offer my best respects and services to you, my lord."

D'Artagnan then, returning to the officer, said:

"Sir, have the kindness also to awaken Monsieur de Valon, and to say 'tis by his eminence's orders, and that I shall wait for him at the stables."

The officer went off with an eagerness that showed the Gascon that he had some personal interest in the matter.

Porthos was snoring most musically, when some one touched him on the shoulder.

"I come from the cardinal," said the officer.

"Heigho!" said Porthos, opening his large eyes; "what do you say?"

"I say that his eminence has ordered you to go to England, and that Monsieur d'Artagnan is waiting for you in the stables."

Porthos sighed heavily—arose, took his hat, his pistols, and his cloak, and departed, casting a look of regret on the bed where he had hoped to sleep so well.

Scarcely had he turned his back than the officer laid himself down in it, and he had not crossed the threshold of the door before his successor, in his turn, snored immoderately. It was very natural, he being the only man in the whole assemblage of people, except the king, the queen, and the Duke of Orleans, who slept gratis.

CHAPTER LII.

IN WHICH WE HEAR TIDINGS OF ARAMIS.

D'ARTAGNAN went straight to the stables; day had just dawned. He found his horse and that of Porthos fastened to the manger, but to an empty manger. He took pity on these poor animals, and went to a corner of the stable, where he saw a little straw, but in doing so he struck his foot against a round body, which uttered a cry, and arose on its knees, rubbing its eyes. It was Mousqueton, who, having no straw to lie upon himself, had helped himself to that of the horses.

"Mousqueton," cried D'Artagnan, "let us be off! Let us set off."

Mousqueton, recognizing the voice of his master's friend, got up suddenly, and in doing so let fall some louis which he had appropriated to himself illegally during the night.

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, picking up a louis and displaying it; "here's a louis that smells of straw a little."

Mousqueton blushed so confusedly that the Gascon began to laugh at him, and said:

"Porthos would be angry, my dear Monsieur Mouston, but I pardon you—only let us remember that this gold must serve us as a joke—so be gay—come along."

Mousqueton instantly assumed a most jovial countenance, saddled the horses quickly, and mounted his own without making faces over it.

While this went on, Porthos arrived with a very cross look on his face, and was astonished to find the lieutenant resigned, and Mousqueton almost merry.

"Ah, that's it," he cried, "you have your promotion, and I my barony."

"We are going to fetch our brevets," said D'Artagnan, "and when we come back, Master Mazarin will sign them."

"And where are we going?" asked Porthos.

"To Paris first—I have affairs to settle.

And they both set out for Paris.

On arriving at its gates they were astounded to see the threatening aspect of the capital. Around two broken-down carriages the people were uttering imprecations, while the persons who had attempted to escape were made prisoners—that is to say, an old man and two women. On the other hand, when the two friends wanted to enter, they showed them every kind of civility, thinking them deserters from the royal party, and wishing to bind them to their own.

"What's the king doing?" they asked.

"He is sleeping."

"And the Spanish woman?"

"She's dreaming."

"And the cursed Italian?"

"He is awake, so keep on the watch—as they are gone away, it's for some purpose, rely on it. But as you are the strongest, after all," continued D'Artagnan, "don't be furious with old men and women, and keep your wrath for good occasions."

The people listened to these words, and let go the ladies, who thanked D'Artagnan with an appealing look.

"Now! onward!" cried the Gascon.

And they continued their way, crossing the barricades, getting the chains about their legs, pushed about, questioning, and questioned.

In the place of the Palais Royal D'Artagnan saw a sergeant, who was drilling six or seven hundred citizens. It was Planchet, who brought into play profitably the recollections of the regiment de Piémont. He recognized his old master, and, staring at him with wondering eyes, stood still. The first row, seeing their sergeant stop, stopped, and soon to the very last.

"These citizens are awfully ridiculous," observed D'Artagnan to Planchet, and went on his way.

Five minutes afterward he entered the Hotel of La Chevrette, where pretty Madeleine, the hostess, came to him.

"My dear Mistress Turquanie," said the Gascon, "if you happen to have any money, lock it up quickly. If you happen to have any jewels, hide them directly—if you happen to have any debtors, make them pay you, or have any creditors, don't pay them."

"Why, prythee?" asked Madeleine.

"Because Paris is going to be reduced to dust and ashes like Babylon, of which you have heard peak."

"And you are going to leave me at such a time?"

"This very instant."

"And where are you going?"

"Ah, if you could tell me that you'd be doing me a service."

"Ah, me! ah, me!"

"Have you any letters for me?" inquired D'Artagnan, wishing to signify to the hostess that her lamentations were superfluous, and that therefore she had better spare him the demonstrations of her grief.

"There's one just arrived."

"From Athos," and he read as follows:

"DEAR D'ARTAGNAN, DEAR DE VALON: My good friends, perhaps this may be the last time that you will ever hear from me. Let God, our courage, and the remembrance of our friendship, support you, nevertheless. I entrust to you certain papers which are at Blois, and in two months and a half, if you do not hear of us, take possession of them.

"Embrace, with all your heart, the vicomte, for your devoted friend,
ATHOS."

"I believe, by heaven," said D'Artagnan, "that I shall embrace him, since he's upon our road; and if he is so unfortunate as to lose our dear Athos, from this very day he becomes my son."

"And I," said Porthos, "shall make him my sole heir."

"Let us see, what more does Athos say?"

"Should you meet on your journey a certain Monsieur Mordaunt, distrust him—in a letter I cannot say more."

"Monsieur Mordaunt!" exclaimed the Gascon, surprised.

"Monsieur Mordaunt! 'tis well," said Porthos, "we shall remember that—but look there's a postscript."

"We conceal the place where we are, dear friend, knowing your brotherly affection, and that you would come and die with us were we to reveal it."

"Confound it," interrupted Porthos, with an explosion of

passion which sent Mousqueton to the other end of the room; "are they in danger of dying."

D'Artagnan continued—

"Athos bequeaths to you, Raoul, and I bequeath to you my revenge. If by any good luck you lay your hand on a certain man, named Mordaunt, tell Porthos to take him into a corner, and to wring his neck. I dare not say more in a letter."

"If that is all, Aramis, it is easily done," said Porthos.

"On the contrary," observed D'Artagnan, with a vexed look; "it would be impossible."

"How so?"

"This is precisely this Monsieur Mordaunt, whom we are going to join at Boulogne, and with whom we cross to England."

"Well, suppose instead of joining this Monsieur Mordaunt, we were to go and join our friends?" said Porthos, with a gesture fit to frighten a whole army.

"I did think of it, but this letter has neither date nor postmark."

"True," said Porthos. And he began to wander about the room like a man beside himself, gesticulating, and half drawing his sword out of the scabbard.

As to D'Artagnan, he remained standing like a man in consternation, with the deepest affliction depicted on his face.

"Ah, 'tis not right; Athos insults us; he wishes to die alone—that's bad."

Mousqueton, witnessing this despair, melted into tears, in a corner of the room.

"Stop—an idea!" cried Porthos; "indeed, my dear D'Artagnan, I don't know how you manage, but you are always full of ideas; let us go and embrace Raoul."

"Woe to the man who should happen to contradict my master at this moment," said Mousqueton to himself. "I wouldn't give a farthing for his skin."

They set out. On arriving at St. Denis the friends found a vast concourse of people. It was the Duc de Beaufort who was coming from the Vendômois, and whom the coadjutor was showing to the Parisians, intoxicated with joy. With the duke's aid, they considered themselves already as invincible.

"Is it true," said the guard to the two cavaliers, "that the Duc de Beaufort has arrived in Paris?"

"Nothing more certain; and the best proof of it is," said D'Artagnan, "that he has despatched us to meet the Duc de Vendôme, his father, who is coming in his turn."

"Long live De Beaufort!" cried the guards, and they drew back respectfully to let their two friends pass. Once across the barriers, these two knew neither fatigue nor fear. Their horses flew, and they never ceased speaking of Athos and Aramis.

The camp had entered Saint Omer: the friends made a little round, and went to the camp, and gave the army an exact account of the flight of the king and queen. They found Raoul near his tent, reclined upon a truss of hay, of which his horse stole some mouthfuls; the young man's eyes were red, and he seemed dejected. The Maréchal de Grammont and the Duc de Guiche had returned to Paris, and he was quite lonely. As soon as he saw the two cavaliers, he ran to them with open arms.

"Oh, is it you, dear friends? Do you come here to fetch me? Shall you take me away with you? Do you bring me tidings of my guardian?"

"Have you not received any?" said D'Artagnan to the youth.

"Alas! sir, no—and I do not know what has become of him—so that I am really so unhappy as to weep."

In fact, tears rolled down his cheeks.

Porthos turned aside, in order not to show on his good round face what was passing in his mind.

"Deuce take it," cried D'Artagnan, more moved than he had been for a long time—"don't despair, my friend, if you have not received any letters from the count, we have received—we—one."

"Oh, really!" cried Raoul.

"And a comforting one, too," added D'Artagnan, seeing the delight that his intelligence gave the young man.

"Have you got it?" said Raoul.

"Yes—that is, I had it," replied the Gascon, making believe to try and find it. "Wait, it ought to be there, in my pocket; it speaks of his return, does it not, Porthos?"

"Yes," replied Porthos, laughing.

"Eh! I read it a little while since. Can I have lost it? Ah! confound it! my pocket has a hole in it."

"Oh yes, Monsieur Raoul!" said Mousqueton; "the letter was very consoling. These gentlemen read it to me, and I wept for joy."

"But then, at any rate, you know where he is, Monsieur d'Artagnan?" asked Raoul, somewhat comforted.

"Ah! that's the thing!" replied the Gascon. "Undoubtedly I know it, but it is a mystery."

"Not to me, I hope?"

"No, not to you, so I am going to tell you where he is."

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan with his large wondering eyes.

"Where the devil shall I say that he is, so that he cannot try to rejoin him?" thought D'Artagnan.

"Well, where is he, sir?" asked Raoul, in a soft and coaxing voice.

"He is at Constantinople."

"Among the Turks!" exclaimed Raoul, alarmed. "Good heavens! how can you tell me that?"

"Does that alarm you?" cried D'Artagnan. "Pooh! what are the Turks to such a man as the Count de la Fère and the Abbé d'Herblay?"

"Ah, his friend is with him!" said Raoul; "that consoles me a little."

"Has he wit or not—this demon D'Artagnan?" said Porthos, astonished at his friend's deception.

"Now, sir," said D'Artagnan, wishing to change the conversation, "here are fifty pistoles that the count has sent you by the same courier. I suppose you have no more money, and that they will be welcome."

"I have still twenty pistoles, sir."

"Well, take them; that makes seventy."

"And if you wish for more," said Porthos, putting his hand to his pocket.

"Thank you, sir," replied Raoul, blushing; "thank you a thousand times."

At this moment Olivain appeared. "Apropos," said D'Artagnan, loud enough for the servant to hear him, "are you satisfied with Olivain?"

"Yes, in some respects, pretty well."

"What fault do you find with the fellow?"

"He is a glutton."

"Oh, sir," cried Olivain, reappearing at this accusation.

"And somewhat of a thief."

"Oh, sir! oh!"

"And, more especially, a great coward."

"Oh, oh, sir! you really villify me!" cried Olivain.

"The deuce!" cried D'Artagnan. "Pray learn, Monsieur Olivain, that people like us are not to be served by cowards. You rob your master—you eat his sweetmeats and drink his wine; but, by Jove! don't be a coward, or I shall cut off your ears. Look at Monsieur Mouston, see the honorable wounds he has received, and look how his habitual valor has given dignity to his countenance."

Mousqueton was in the third heavens, and would have embraced D'Artagnan had he dared; meanwhile, he resolved to sacrifice his life for him on the next occasion that presented itself.

"Send away that fellow, Raoul," said the Gascon; "for if he's a coward he will disgrace thee some day."

"Monsieur says I am a coward," cried Olivain, "because he wanted the other day to fight a cornet in Grammont's regiment, and I refused to accompany him."

"Monsieur Olivain, a lackey ought never to disobey," said D'Artagnan, sternly; then, taking him aside, he whispered to him: "Thou hast done right; thy master was wrong; here's a crown for thee; but should he ever be insulted, and thou dost not let thyself be cut in quarters for him, I will cut out thy tongue. Remember that well."

Olivain bowed, and slipped the crown into his pocket.

"And now, Raoul," said the Gascon, "Monsieur de Valon and I are going away as ambassadors—where, I know not; but should you want anything, write to Madame Turquaine, at La Chevette, Rue Tiquetonne, and draw upon her money as on a banker—with economy; for it is not so well filled as that of Monsieur St. Emery."

And having, meantime, embraced his ward, he passed him into the robust arms of Porthos, who lifted him up from the ground and held him a moment suspended, near the noble heart of the formidable giant.

"Come," said D'Artagnan, "let us go."

And they set out for Boulogne, where, toward evening, they arrived, their horses covered with foam and heat.

At ten steps from the place where they halted was a young man in black, who seemed waiting for some one, and who, from the moment he saw them enter the town, never took his eyes off them.

D'Artagnan approached him, and seeing him stare so fixedly, said:

"Well, friend! I don't like people to scan me!"

"Sir," said the young man, "do you not come from Paris, if you please?"

D'Artagnan thought it was some gossip who wanted news from the capital.

"Yes, sir," he said in a softened tone.

"Are you not to lodge at the Arms of England?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you not charged with a mission from his eminence Cardinal Mazarin?"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case I am the man you have to do with. I am Mr. Mordaunt."

"Ah!" thought D'Artagnan, "the man I am warned against by Athos."

"Ah!" thought Porthos, "the man Aramis wants me to strangle."

"Well, gentlemen," resumed Mordaunt, "we must set off without delay; to-day is the last day granted me by the cardinal. My ship is ready, and had you not come, I must have set off without you, for General Cromwell expects my return impatiently."

"So!" thought the lieutenant, "'tis to General Cromwell that our despatches are addressed."

"Have you no letter to him?" asked the young man.

"I have one, the seal of which I was not to break till I reached London; but since you tell me to whom it is addressed, 'tis useless to wait till then."

D'Artagnan tore open the envelope of the letter. It was directed to "Mr. Oliver Cromwell, General of the army of the English nation."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "a singular commission."

"Who is this Monsieur Oliver Cromwell?" asked Porthos.

"Formerly a brewer," replied the Gascon.

"Perhaps Mazarin wishes to make a speculation in beer, as we have in straw," said Porthos.

"Come, come, gentlemen," said Mordaunt impatiently, "let us depart."

"What!" cried Porthos, "without supper? Cannot Monsieur Cromwell wait a little?"

"Yes, but I cannot," answered Mordaunt.

"Oh! as to you, that is not my concern, and I shall sup either with or without your permission."

The young man's eyes kindled a little, but he restrained himself.

"Just as you please, gentleman, provided we set sail," he said.

"The name of your ship?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"The Standard."

"Very well; in half an hour we shall be on board." And the friends, spurring on their horses, rode to the hotel, the "Arms of England," where they supped with hearty appetite, and then at once proceeded to the port.

There they found a brig ready to set sail, upon the deck of which they recognized Mordaunt, walking up and down impatiently.

"It is singular," said D'Artagnan, while the boat was taking them to the Standard, "it is astonishing how that young man resembles some one whom I have known—but whom I cannot name."

A few minutes later they were on board; but the embarkation of horses was a longer matter than that of the men, and it was eight o'clock before they raised the anchor.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE SCOTCHMAN.

AND now our readers must leave the Standard to sail peaceably, not toward London, where D'Artagnan and Porthos believed they were going, but to Durham, whither Mordaunt had been ordered to repair by the letter he had received during his sojourn at Boulogne, and accompany us to the Royalist camp, on this side of the Tyne, near Newcastle.

There, placed between two rivers on the borders of Scotland, but still on English soil, were the tents of a little army extended. It was midnight. Some Highlanders were carelessly keeping watch. The moon, which was partially obscured by two heavy clouds, now and then lit up the muskets of the sentinels, or silvered the walls, the roofs, and the spires of the town that Charles I. had just surrendered to the parliamentary troops, while Oxford and Newark still held out for him, in the hopes of coming to some arrangement.

At one of the extremities of the camp, near an immense tent, in which the Scottish officers were holding a kind of council, presided over by Lord Leven, lay their commander, a man attired as a cavalier, sleeping on the turf, his right hand extended over his sword.

About fifty paces off, another young man, also appareled as a cavalier, was talking to a Scotch sentinel, and, though a foreigner, he seemed to understand, without much difficulty, the answers given him in broad Perthshire dialect.

As the town clock of Newcastle struck one the sleeper awoke, and, with all the gestures of a man rousing himself out of a deep sleep, he looked attentively about him. Perceiving that he was alone, he rose, and making a little circuit, passed close to the young man who was speaking to the sentinel. The former had, no doubt, finished his questions, for a moment after he said good-night, and carelessly followed the same path taken by the first cavalier.

In the shadow of a tent the former was awaiting him.

"*Eh bien, mon cher ami,*" said he, in as pure French as has ever been uttered between Rouen and Tours. "*Eh bien, mon ami*; there is not a moment to lose; we must let the king know immediately."

"Why, what is the matter?"

"It is too long to tell you; besides, you wish to hear it all directly, and the least word dropped here might ruin all. We must go and find Lord de Winter."

They both set off to the other end of the camp, but as it did not cover more than a surface of five hundred feet, they quickly arrived at the tent they were looking for.

"Tony, is your master sleeping?" said one of the two cavaliers, to a servant who was lying in the outer compartment, which served as a kind of anteroom.

"No, Monsieur le Comte," answered the servant, "I think not; or at least, he has not long been so, for he was pacing up and down for more than two hours after he left the king, and the sound of his footsteps has only ceased during the last ten minutes; however, you may look and see," added the lackey, raising the curtained entrance of the tent.

As he had said, Lord de Winter was seated near an aperture, arranged as a window to let in the night air, his eyes mechanically following the course of the moon, hidden, as we before observed, by heavy black clouds. The two friends approached De Winter, who, leaning his head on his hand, was gazing at the heavens: he did not hear them enter, and remained in the same attitude till he felt a hand placed on his shoulder.

He turned round, recognized Athos and Aramis, and held out his hand to them.

"Have you observed," said he to them, "what a blood-red color the moon is to-night?"

"No," replied Athos; "I thought she looked much the same as usual."

"Look again, chevalier," returned Lord de Winter.

"I must own," said Aramis, "I am like the Count de la Fère, I cannot see anything remarkable about it."

"My lord;" said Athos, "in a position so precarious as ours, we must examine the earth, and not the heavens. Have you studied our Scotch troops, and have you confidence in them?"

"The Scotch?" inquired De Winter. "What Scotch?"

"Ours! Egad!" exclaimed Athos. "Those to whom the king has confided Lord Leven's Highlanders."

"No," said De Winter, then he paused; "but tell me, can you not perceive the roseate tint which covers the heavens?"

"Not the least in the world," said Aramis and Athos at once.

"Tell me," continued De Winter, always possessed by the same idea, "is there not a tradition in France that Henry IV., the evening before the day he was assassinated, when he was playing at chess with M. de Bassompierre, saw spots of blood on the chessboard?"

"Yes," said Athos, "and the Maréchal has often told me so himself."

"Then it was so," murmured De Winter, "and the next day Henry IV. was killed."

"But what has this vision of Henry IV. to do with you, my lord?" inquired Aramis.

"Nothing; and, indeed, I am mad to amuse you with such things, when your coming to my tent at such an hour announces that you are the bearers of important news."

"Yes, my lord," said Athos. "I wish to speak to the king."

"To the king! but the king is asleep."

"I have something important to reveal to him."

"Cannot that be put off till to-morrow?"

"He must know it this moment; and, perhaps, it is already too late."

"Come, then," said Lord de Winter.

Lord de Winter's tent was pitched by the side of the royal one; a kind of corridor communicating between the two. This corridor was guarded, not by a sentinel; but by a confidential servant, through whom in any case of urgency Charles could communicate instantly with his faithful subject.

"These gentlemen are with me," said De Winter.

The lackey bowed and let them pass. As he had said, on a camp-bed, dressed in his black doublet, booted, unbelted, with his felt hat beside him, lay the king, overcome by sleep and fatigue. They advanced, and Athos, who was first to enter, gazed a moment in silence on that pale and noble face, encircled by his long and matted dark hair, the blue veins showing through his transparent skin; his eyes seemingly swollen by tears.

Athos sighed deeply; the sigh awoke the king—so lightly did he sleep.

He opened his eyes.

"Ah!" said he, raising himself on his elbow, "is it you, Count de la Fère?"

"Yes, sire," replied Athos.

"You were watching me while I slept, and you come to bring me some news?"

"Alas! sire," answered Athos, "your majesty has guessed rightly."

"Then it is bad news?"

"Yes, sire."

"Never mind! the messenger is welcome, and you never come here without giving me pleasure. You, whose devotion recognizes neither country nor misfortune—you, who are sent to me by Henrietta; whatever news you bring, speak out."

"Sire, Cromwell has arrived this night at Newcastle."

"Ah!" exclaimed the king, "to fight?"

"No, sire, but to purchase your majesty!"

"What did you say?"

"I said, sire, that he owes four hundred thousand pounds to the Scottish army."

"For unpaid wages—yes, I know it. For the last year my faithful Highlanders have fought for honor alone."

Athos smiled.

"Well, sire! although honor is a fine thing, they are tired of fighting for it, and to-night they have sold you for two hundred thousand pounds—that is to say, the half of what is owing to them."

"Impossible!" cried the king; "the Scotch sell their king for two hundred thousand pounds? and who is the Judas who has concluded this infamous bargain?"

"Lord Leven."

"Are you certain of it, sir?"

"I heard it with my own ears."

The king sighed deeply, as if his heart would break, and then buried his face in his hands.

"Oh! the Scotch," he exclaimed—"the Scotch that I called 'my faithful,' to whom I trusted myself, when I could have fled to Oxford—the Scotch!—my countrymen—the Scotch! my brothers! But are you well assured of it, sir?"

"Lying behind the tent of Lord Leven, I raised it, and saw all—heard all!"

"And when is this to be consummated?"

"To-day, in the morning; so your majesty must perceive there is no time to lose!"

"To do what? since you say I am sold."

"To cross the Tyne, reach Scotland, rejoin Lord Montrose, who will not sell you."

"And what shall I do in Scotland? a war of partisans, unworthy of a king."

"Robert Bruce's example will absolve you, sire."

"No! no, I have fought too long; they have sold me, they shall give me up, and the eternal shame of their treason shall fall on their heads."

"Sire," said Athos, "perhaps a king should act thus, but not a husband and a father. I have come in the name of your wife and daughter and two other children you have still in London, and I say to you, 'Live, sire, God wills it!'"

The king raised himself, buckled on his belt, and passing his handkerchief over his moist forehead, said:

"Well, what is to be done?"

"Sire, you have in the army only one regiment on which you may rely."

"De Winter," said the king, "do you believe in the fidelity of yours?"

"Sire, they are but men, and men are become both weak and wicked. I will not answer for them. I would confide my life to them, but I should hesitate ere I confided to them that of your majesty."

"Well!" said Athos, "since you have not a regiment, we are three devoted men, we are enough. Let your majesty mount on horseback, and place yourself in the midst of us, and we will cross the Tyne, reach Scotland, and you are saved."

"Is this your counsel also, De Winter?" inquired the king.

"Yes, sire!"

"And yours, Monsieur d'Herblay?"

"Yes, sire!"

"As you wish, then. De Winter, give all the necessary orders."

Winter left the tent; in the meantime the king finished his toilette. The first rays of daybreak penetrated through the apertures of the tent as De Winter re-entered it.

"All is ready, sire," said he.

"For us also?" inquired Athos.

"Grimaud and Blaisois are holding your horses, ready saddled."

"In that case," exclaimed Athos, "let us not lose an instant in setting off."

"Come," added the king.

"Sire," said Aramis, "will not your majesty acquaint some of my friends of this?"

"My friends!" answered Charles, sadly, "I have but three—one of twenty years, who has never forgotten me, and two of a week's standing, whom I shall never forget. Come, gentlemen, come."

The king quitted his tent, and found his horse ready waiting for him. It was a chestnut that the king had ridden for three years, and of which he was very fond.

The horse neighed with delight at seeing him.

"Ah!" said the king, "I was unjust, here is a creature that loves me. You, at least, will be faithful to me, Arthur."

The horse, as if it had understood those words, bent its red nostrils toward the king's face, and parting its lips, displayed all its white teeth as if with pleasure.

"Yes, yes," said the king, caressing it with his hand, "yes, my Arthur, thou art a good creature."

After this little scene, Charles threw himself into the saddle, and, turning to Athos, Aramis, and De Winter, said:

"Now, gentlemen, I am at your service."

But Athos was standing with his eyes fixed on a black line which bordered the banks of the Tyne, and seemed to extend double the length of the camp.

"What is that line?" cried Athos, whose vision was still rather obscured by the uncertain light of daybreak. "What is that line? I did not perceive it yesterday."

"It must be the fog rising from the river," said the king.

"Sire, it is something more opaque than the fog."

"Indeed," said De Winter. "It appears to me like a bar of red color."

"It is the enemy, who have made a sortie from Newcastle, and are surrounding us!" exclaimed Athos.

"The enemy!" cried the king.

"Yes, the enemy. It is too late. Stop a moment; does not that sunbeam yonder, just by the side of the town, glitter on the Ironsides?"

This is the name given to the cuirassiers whom Cromwell had made his body-guard.

"Ah!" said the king, "we shall soon prove whether my Highlanders have betrayed me or not."

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed Athos.

"To give them the order to charge, and run down these miserable rebels."

And the king, putting spurs to his horse, set off to the tent of Lord Leven.

"Follow him," said Athos.

"Come!" exclaimed Aramis.

"Is the king wounded?" cried Lord de Winter. "I see spots of blood on the ground," and he set off to follow the two friends.

He was stopped by Athos.

"Go and call out your regiment," said he, "I can foresee that we shall have need of it directly."

De Winter turned his horse, and the two friends rode on. It had taken but two minutes for the king to reach the tent of the Scottish commander; he dismounted and entered.

"The king!" they exclaimed, as they all rose in bewilderment.

Charles was indeed in the midst of them; his hat on his head, his brows bent, striking his boot with his riding-whip.

"Yes, gentlemen, the king in person, the king who has come to ask some account of all that has happened."

"What is it, sire?" exclaimed Lord Leven.

"It is, sir," said the king angrily, "that General Cromwell has arrived at Newcastle; that you knew it, and I have not been informed of it; that the enemy have left the town, and are now closing the passages of the Tyne against us; that our sentinels have seen this movement, and I have been left unacquainted with it. It is that, by an infamous treaty, you have sold me for two hundred thousand pounds to the parliament. Of this treaty at least I have been warned. This is the matter, gentlemen; answer and exculpate yourselves, for I stand here to accuse you."

"Sire," said Lord Leven, with hesitation, "sire, your majesty has been deceived by a false report."

"My own eyes have seen the enemy extend itself between myself and Scotland. With my own ears I have heard the clauses of the treaty debated."

The Scotch chieftains looked at each other in their turn with frowning brows.

"Sire," murmured Lord Leven, crushed down by shame; "sire, we are ready to give you every proof of our fidelity."

"I ask but one," said the king; "put the army in battle array and face the enemy."

"That cannot be, sire," said the earl.

"How—cannot be? and what hinders it?" exclaimed Charles.

"Your majesty is well aware that there is a truce between us and the English army."

"And if there is a truce the English army has broken it in leaving the town, contrary to the agreement which kept it there. Now, I tell you, you must pass with me through this army across to Scotland, and if you refuse, you may choose between two names—which the contempt of all honest men will brand you with, you are either cowards or traitors!"

The eyes of the Scotch flashed fire ; and, as often happens on such occasions, from shame they passed to extreme effrontery, and two heads of clans advanced toward the king.

“ Yes,” said they, “ we have promised to deliver Scotland and England from him who for the last five-and-twenty years has sucked the blood and gold of Scotland and England. We have promised, and we will keep our promise. Charles Stuart, you are our prisoner.”

And both extended their hands as if to seize the king ; but before they could touch him with the tips of their fingers both had fallen—one dead and the other stunned.

Aramis had passed his sword through the body of the first, and Athos had knocked down the other with the butt-end of his pistol.

Then, as Lord Leven and the other chieftains retired, alarmed at this unexpected succor, which seemed to fall from heaven for him whom they believed already their prisoner, Athos and Aramis dragged the king from the perjured assembly, into which he had so imprudently ventured, and throwing themselves on horseback, all three returned at full gallop to the royal tent.

On their road they perceived Lord de Winter marching at the head of his regiment. The king motioned him to accompany them.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE AVENGER.

THEY all four entered the tent ; they had no plan ready—they must think of one.

The king threw himself into an armchair. “ I am lost,” said he.

“ No, sire,” replied Athos ; “ you are only betrayed.”

The king sighed deeply.

“ Betrayed ! yes—betrayed by the Scotch, among whom I was born ; whom I have always loved better than the English. Oh, traitors that ye are !”

“ Sire,” said Athos, “ this is not a moment for recrimination, but the time to show yourself a king and a gentleman. Up, sire, up ! for you have here at least three men who will not betray you. Ah ! if we had been five !” murmured Athos, thinking of D’Artagnan and Porthos.

“ What are you saying ?” inquired Charles, rising.

"I said, sire, there is more than one thing open. Lord de Winter answers for his regiment, or at least very nearly so—we will not split straws about words—let him place himself at the head of his men, we will place ourselves at the side of your majesty, and let us cut through Cromwell's army, and reach Scotland."

"There is another method," said Aramis. "Let one of us put on the dress, and mount the king's horse. While they pursue him the king might escape."

"It is good advice," said Athos, "and if the king will do us the honor, we shall be truly grateful to him."

"What do you think of this counsel, De Winter?" asked the king, looking with admiration at these two men, whose chief idea seemed to be how they could take on their own shoulders all the dangers which threatened him.

"I think that the only chance of saving your majesty has just been proposed by Monsieur d'Herblay. I humbly entreat your majesty to choose quickly, for we have not a moment to lose."

"But if I accept, it is death, or at least imprisonment, for him who takes my place."

"It is the glory of having saved his king," cried De Winter.

The king looked at his old friend with tears in his eyes, undid the order of the Saint-Esprit which he wore, to honor the two Frenchmen who were with him, and passed it round De Winter's neck, who received on his knees this striking proof of his sovereign's confidence and friendship.

"It is right," said Athos; "he has served your majesty longer than we have."

The king overheard these words, and turned round, with tears in his eyes.

"Wait a moment, sirs," said he; "I have an order for each of you also."

He turned to a closet where his own orders were locked up, and took out two ribbons of the Order of the Garter.

"These cannot be for us?" said Athos.

"Why not, sir?" asked Charles.

"Such are for royalty, and we are simple commoners."

"Speak not of crowned heads. I shall not find among them such great hearts as yours. No, no—you do yourselves injustice; but I am here to do justice to you. On your knees, count."

Athos knelt down, and the king passed the ribbon from left to right as usual, and said: "I make you a knight. Be

brave, faithful, and loyal. You are brave, faithful, and loyal. I knight you, Monsieur le Comte."

Then, turning to Aramis, he said:

"It is now your turn, Monsieur le Chevalier."

The same ceremony recommenced, with the same words, while De Winter unlaced his leather cuirass, that he might disguise himself like the king. Charles, having ended with Aramis the same as Athos, embraced them both.

"Sire," said De Winter, who in this trying emergency felt all his strength and energy fire up, "we are ready."

The king looked at the three gentlemen. "Then we must fly!" said he.

"Fly through an army, sire?" said Athos.

"Then I shall die sword in hand," said Charles. "Monsieur le Comte, Monsieur le Chevalier, if ever I am king——"

"Sire, you have already honored us more than simple gentlemen could ever aspire to, therefore gratitude is on our side. But we must not lose time; we have already wasted too much."

The king again shook hands with all three, exchanged hats with De Winter, and went out.

De Winter's regiment was ranged on some high ground above the camp. The king, followed by the three friends, turned his steps that way. The Scotch camp seemed as if at last awakened; the soldiers had come out of their tents, and taken up their station in battle array.

"Do you see that?" said the king. "Perhaps they are penitent, and preparing to march."

"If they are penitent," said Athos, "let them follow us."

"Well," said the king, "what shall we do?"

"Let us examine the enemy's army."

At the same instant the eyes of the little group were fixed on the same line which at daybreak they had mistaken for fog, and which the morning sun now plainly showed was an army in order of battle. The air was soft and clear, as it always is at this hour of the morning. The regiments, the standards, and even the colors of the horses and uniforms were now clearly distinct.

On the summit of a rising ground, a little in advance of the enemy, appeared a short and heavy-looking man; this man was surrounded by officers. He turned a spy-glass toward the little group among which the king stood.

"Does this man know your majesty personally?" inquired Aramis.

Charles smiled.

"That man is Cromwell!" said he.

"Ah!" said Athos, "how much time we have lost."

"Now," said the king, "give the word, and let us start."

"Will you not give it, sire?" asked Athos.

"No; I make you my lieutenant-general," said the king.

"Listen, then, Lord de Winter. Proceed sire, I beg.

What we are going to say does not concern your majesty."

The king, smiling, turned a few steps back.

"This is what I propose to do," said Athos. "We will divide our regiment into two squadrons. You will put yourself at the head of the first; we and his majesty at the head of the second. If no obstacle occurs, we will both charge together, force the enemy's line, and throw ourselves into the Tyne, which we must cross, either by fording or swimming; if, on the contrary, any repulse should take place, you and your men must fight to the last man, while we and the king proceed on our road. Once arrived at the brink of the river, should we even find them three ranks deep, as long as you and your regiment do your duty, we will look to the rest."

"To horse!" said Lord de Winter.

"To horse!" re-echoed Athos; "all is arranged and decided."

"Now, gentlemen," cried the king, "forward! and rally to the old cry of France—Montjoy and St. Denis. The war-cry of England is too often in the mouths of those traitors."

The Scotch army stood motionless and silent with shame on viewing these preparations.

Some of the chieftains left the ranks, and broke their swords in two.

"There," said the king, "that consoles me; they are not all traitors."

At this moment De Winter's voice was raised with the cry of "Forward!"

The first squadron moved off; the second followed it, and descended from the platform. A regiment of cuirassiers, nearly equal as to numbers, issued from behind the hill, and came full gallop toward it.

The king pointed this out.

"Sire," said Athos, "we foresaw this, and if Lord de Winter's men do their duty, we are saved instead of lost."

At this moment they heard, above all the galloping and neighing of the horses, De Winter's voice crying out:

"Sword in hand."

At these words every sword was drawn, and glittered in the air like lightning.

"Now, gentlemen," said the king in his turn, excited by this sight, and the sound of it, "come, gentlemen, sword in hand."

But Aramis and Athos were the only ones to obey this command, and the king's example.

"We are betrayed," said the king, in a low voice.

"Wait a moment," said Athos, "perhaps they do not recognize your majesty's voice, and await the order of their captain."

"Have they not heard that of their colonel? But look! look!" cried the king, drawing up his horse with a sudden jerk, which threw it back on its haunches, and seizing the bridle of Athos' horse.

"Ah, cowards! ah, traitors!" cried out Lord de Winter, whose voice they heard, while his men, quitting their ranks, dispersed all over the plain.

About fifteen men were ranged around him, and awaited the charge of Cromwell's cuirassiers.

"Let us go and die with them!" said the king.

"Let us go," said Athos and Aramis.

"All faithful hearts with me!" cried out De Winter.

This voice was heard by the two friends, who set off at full gallop.

"No quarter," cried out a voice in French, answering to that of De Winter, which made them tremble.

It was the voice of a cavalier mounted on a magnificent black horse, who was charging at the head of the English regiment, of which, in his ardor, he was ten steps in advance.

"'Tis him!" murmured De Winter; his eyes glazed, and letting his sword fall to his side.

"The king! the king!" cried out several voices, deceived by the blue ribbon and chestnut horse of De Winter; "take him alive."

"No! it is not the king!" exclaimed the cavalier. "Lord de Winter, you are not the king; you are my uncle."

At the same moment Mordaunt, for it was he, cocked his pistol at De Winter, the fire flashed, and the ball entered the heart of the old cavalier, who, with one bound on his saddle, fell back into the arms of Athos, murmuring, "He is revenged."

"Think of my mother!" shouted Mordaunt, as his horse plunged and darted off at full gallop.

"Wretch!" exclaimed Aramis, raising his pistol, as he passed by him; but the fire flashed in the pan, and did not go off.

At this moment the whole regiment came up, and they fell upon the few men who had held out, surrounding the two Frenchmen. Athos, after making sure that Lord de Winter was really dead, let fall the corpse, and said:

"Come, Aramis, now for the honor of France," and the two Englishmen, who were the nearest to them, fell mortally wounded.

At the same moment a fearful "hurrah!" rent the air, and thirty blades glittered above their heads.

Suddenly a man sprang out of the English ranks, fell upon Athos, entwined his muscular arms around him, and tearing his sword from him, said in his ear:

"Silence! yield yourself—you yield to me, do you not?"

A giant had seized also Aramis' two wrists, who struggled in vain to release himself from this formidable grasp.

"D'Art——" exclaimed Athos, while the Gascon covered his mouth with his hand.

"I yield myself prisoner," said Aramis, giving up his sword to Porthos.

"Fire, fire," cried out Mordaunt, returning to the group of friends.

"And wherefore fire?" said the colonel; "every one has yielded."

"It is the son of milady," said Athos to D'Artagnan. "I recognized him."

"It is the monk," whispered Porthos to Aramis.

"I know it."

And now the ranks began to open. D'Artagnan held the bridle of Athos' horse, and Porthos that of Aramis. Both of them attempted to lead his prisoner off the battlefield.

This movement revealed the spot where De Winter's body had fallen. Mordaunt had found it out, and was gazing at it with an expression of hatred.

Athos, though now quite cool and collected, put his hand to his belt, where his loaded pistols still remained.

"What are you about?" said D'Artagnan.

"Let me kill him."

"We are all four lost, if, by the least gesture, you discover that you recognize him."

Then, turning to the young man, he exclaimed:

"A fine prize! a fine prize, friend Mordaunt; we have, both myself and Monsieur de Valon, taken two knights of the garter, nothing less."

"But," said Mordaunt, looking at Athos and Aramis with bloodshot eyes, "these are Frenchmen, I imagine."

"Faith, I don't know. Are you French, sir?" said he to Athos.

"I am," replied the latter gravely.

"Very well, my dear sir! you are the prisoner of a fellow countryman."

"But the king—where is the king?" exclaimed Athos anxiously.

"Ah! we have got him."

"Yes," said Aramis, "through an infamous act of treason."

Porthos pressed his friend's hand, and said to him:

"Yes, sir, all is fair in war—stratagem as well as force. Look yonder."

At this instant the squadron—that ought to have protected Charles' retreat—was advancing to meet the English regiments. The king, who was entirely surrounded, walked alone on foot. He appeared calm, but it was evidently not without a great effort. Drops of perspiration rolled down his face; and from time to time he put a handkerchief to his mouth, to wipe off the blood that flowed from it.

"Behold Nebuchadnezzar!" exclaimed an old Puritan soldier, whose eyes flashed at the sight of one whom he called the tyrant.

"Do you call him Nebuchadnezzar?" said Mordaunt, with a terrible smile; "no, it is Charles the First, the king, the good king Charles, who despoils his subjects to enrich himself."

Charles glanced a moment at the insolent creature who uttered this, but he did not recognize him. Nevertheless, the calm and religious dignity of his countenance abashed Mordaunt.

"*Bon jour, messieurs,*" said the king to the two gentlemen who were held by D'Artagnan and Porthos. "The day has been unfortunate, but it is not your fault, thank God! But where is my old friend, De Winter?"

The two gentlemen turned away their heads in silence.

"Look for him with Strafford," said Mordaunt tauntingly.

Charles shuddered. The demon had known how to wound him. The remembrance of Strafford was a source of lasting remorse to him, the shadow that haunted him by day and night. The king looked around him. He saw a corpse at his feet: it was De Winter's. He uttered not a word nor shed a tear, but a deadly pallor spread over his face; he knelt down on the ground, raised De Winter's head, and unfastening the order of the Saint-Esprit, placed it on his own breast.

"Lord de Winter is killed, then?" inquired D'Artagnan, fixing his eyes on the corpse

"Yes," said Athos, "by his own nephew."

"Come, he was the first of us to go; peace be to him! he was an honest man," said D'Artagnan.

"Charles Stuart," said the colonel of the English regiment, approaching the king, who had just put on the insignia of royalty, "do you yield yourself a prisoner?"

"Colonel Tomlinson," said Charles, "the king cannot yield! the man alone submits to force."

"Your sword."

The king drew his sword and broke it on his knee.

At this moment a horse without a rider, covered with foam, his nostrils extended, and eyes all fire, galloped past, and recognizing his master, stopped and neighed with pleasure; it was Arthur.

The king smiled, patted it with his hand, and then jumped lightly into the saddle.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "conduct me where you will."

Turning back again, he said, "I thought I saw De Winter move; if he still lives, by all you hold most sacred, do not abandon him."

"Never fear, King Charles," said Mordaunt, "the ball pierced his heart."

"Do not breathe a word, nor make the least sign to me or Porthos," said D'Artagnan to Athos and Aramis, "that you recognize this man, for milady is not dead; her soul lives in the body of this demon."

The detachment now moved toward the town with the royal captive; but on the road an aide-de-camp from Cromwell sent orders that Colonel Tomlinson should conduct him to Holdenby Castle.

At the same time couriers started in every direction over England and Europe, to announce that Charles Stuart was now the prisoner of Oliver Cromwell.

CHAPTER LV.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

"HAVE you been to the general?" said Mordaunt to D'Artagnan and Porthos; "you know he sent for you after the action."

"We went first to put our prisoners in a place of safety," replied D'Artagnan. "Do you know, sir, these gentlemen are each of them worth fifteen hundred pounds?"

"Oh! be assured," said Mordaunt, looking at them with an expression he in vain endeavored to soften, "my soldiers will guard them—and guard them well, I promise you."

"I shall take better care of them myself," answered D'Artagnan; "besides, all they require is a good room, with sentinels, from which their parole is enough that they will not attempt to escape. I will go and see about that, and then we shall have the honor of presenting ourselves to your general, and receiving his commands for his eminence."

"You are thinking of starting soon, then?" inquired Mordaunt.

"Our mission is ended, and there is nothing more to retain us now but the good pleasure of the great man to whom we have been sent."

The young man bit his lips, and whispering to his sergeant:

"You will follow these men, and not lose sight of them; when you have discovered where they lodge, come and await me at the town gate."

The sergeant made a sign that he should be obeyed.

Instead of following the mass of prisoners that were being taken into the town, Mordaunt turned his steps toward the rising ground from whence Cromwell had witnessed the battle, and on which he had just had his tent pitched.

Cromwell had given orders that no one was to enter it; but the sentinel who knew that Mordaunt was one of the most confidential friends of the general, thought the order did not extend to the young man. Mordaunt, therefore, raised the canvas, and saw Cromwell seated before a table, his head buried in his hands; his back was turned to him.

Whether he heard Mordaunt or not as he entered, Cromwell did not move. Mordaunt remained standing near the door. At last, after a few moments, Cromwell raised his head, and, as if he divined that some one was there, he turned slowly round.

"I said I wished to be alone!" he exclaimed, on seeing the young man.

"They thought this order did not concern me, sir; nevertheless, if you wish it, I am ready to go."

"Ah! it is you, Mordaunt," said Cromwell, the cloud passing away from over his face; "since you are here, it is well; you may remain."

"I come to congratulate you."

"To congratulate me—what for?"

"On the capture of Charles Stuart. You are now master of England."

"I was much more really so two hours ago."

"How so, general?"

"Because England had need of me to take the tyrant, and now the tyrant is taken. Have you seen him?"

"Yes, sir," said Mordaunt.

"What is his bearing?"

Mordaunt hesitated; but he seemed as if compelled to speak the truth.

"Calm and dignified," said he.

"What did he say?"

"Some parting words to his friends."

"His friends!" murmured Cromwell. "Has he any friends?" Then he added aloud: "Did he make any resistance?"

"No, sir; with the exception of two or three friends, every one deserted him; he had no means of resistance."

"To whom did he give up his sword?"

"He did not give it up—he broke it."

"He did well; but, instead of breaking it, he might have used it to more advantage."

There was a momentary pause.

"I heard that the colonel of the regiment that escorted Charles was killed?" said Cromwell, staring very fixedly at Mordaunt.

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?" inquired Cromwell.

"By me."

"What was his name?"

"Lord de Winter."

"Your uncle?" exclaimed Cromwell.

"My uncle," answered Mordaunt; "but traitors to England are not of my family."

Cromwell observed the young man a moment in silence, and then added:

"Mordaunt, you are strong among the strong ones. And the Frenchmen, how did they behave?"

"Most fearlessly."

"Yes, yes," murmured Cromwell; "the French fight well; and if my glass was good, and I mistake not, they were foremost in the fight."

"They were," replied Mordaunt.

"After you, however," said Cromwell.

"It was the fault of their horses, not theirs."

Another pause.

"And the Scotch?"

"They kept their word, and never stirred," said Mordaunt.

"Wretched men!"

"Their officers wish to see you, sir."

"I have no time for them. Have they been paid?"

"Yes, to-night."

"Let them set off and return to their mountains, and there hide their shame, if their mountains are high enough. I have nothing more to do with them, or they with me. And now go, Mordaunt."

"Before I go," said Mordaunt, "I have some questions and a favor to ask you, sir."

"A favor from me?"

Mordaunt bowed.

"I come to you, my leader, my head, my father, and I ask you, master, are you contented with me?"

Cromwell looked at him with astonishment. The young man remained immovable.

"Yes," said Cromwell; "you have done, since I knew you, not only your duty, but more than your duty; you have been a faithful friend, a clever negotiator, and a good soldier."

"Do you remember, sir, it was my idea, the Scotch treaty, for giving up the king?"

"Yes, the idea was yours. I had not such a contempt for men before that."

"Was I not a good ambassador in France?"

"Yes, for Mazarin has granted what I desired."

"Have I not always fought for your glory and interests?"

"Too ardently, perhaps; it is what I have just reproached you for; but what is the meaning of all these questions?"

"To tell you, my lord, that the moment has now arrived when, with a single word, you may recompense all these services."

"Oh!" said Oliver, with a slight curl of his lip, "I forgot that every service merits some reward, and that up to this moment you have served me for nothing."

"Sir, you can give me in a moment all that I look for."

"What is it? Have they offered you money? Do you wish a step? or some place in the government?"

"Sir, will you grant me my request?"

"Let us hear what it is first."

"Sir, when you have told me to obey an order, have I ever inquired what it is first? I cannot tell you."

"But a request made so formally——"

"Ah! do not fear, sir," said Mordaunt, with apparent simplicity, "it will not ruin you."

"Well, then," said Cromwell, "I promise, as far as lies in my power, to grant your request. Proceed."

"Sir, two prisoners were taken this morning; will you let me have them?"

"For their ransom? Have they, then, offered a large one?" inquired Cromwell.

"On the contrary, I think they are poor, sir."

"They are friends of yours, then?"

"Yes, sir," exclaimed Mordaunt, "they are friends, dear friends of mine, and I would lay down my life for them."

"Very well, Mordaunt," said Cromwell, pleased at having his opinion of the young man raised once more, "I will give them to you; I will not even ask who they are—do as you like with them."

"Thank you, sir!" exclaimed Mordaunt, "thank you; my life is always at your service, and should I lose it, I should still owe you something; thank you—you have, indeed, repaid me munificently for my services."

And he threw himself at the feet of Cromwell; and in spite of the efforts of the Puritan general, who did not like this almost kingly homage, he took his hand and kissed it.

"What?" said Cromwell, arresting him for a moment as he rose, "is there nothing more you wish? neither gold nor rank?"

"You have given me all you can give me, and from to-day your debt is paid."

And Mordaunt darted out of the general's tent, his heart beating, and his eyes sparkling with joy.

Cromwell gazed a moment after him.

"He has killed his uncle!" he murmured. "Alas! what are my servants? Perhaps those who ask nothing, or seem to ask nothing, have asked more in the eyes of heaven than those who tax the country and steal the bread of the poor. Nobody serves me for nothing! Charles, who is my prisoner, may still have friends; but I have none!"

And with a deep sigh he again sank into the reverie which had been interrupted by Mordaunt.

CHAPTER LVI.

MAHOMET.

WHILE Mordaunt was making his way to Cromwell's tent, D'Artagnan and Porthos had brought their prisoners to the house which had been assigned to them as their dwelling at Newcastle.

The two friends made the prisoners enter the house first, while they stood at the door, desiring Mousqueton to take all the four horses to the stable.

"Why don't we go in with them?" asked Porthos.

"We must first see what the sergeant wishes us to do," replied D'Artagnan; and he then asked the sergeant his wishes.

"We have had orders," answered the man, "to help you in taking care of your prisoners."

There could be no fault found with this arrangement; on the contrary, it seemed to be a delicate attention to be received gratefully. D'Artagnan, therefore, thanked the man, and gave him a crown piece, to drink to General Cromwell's health.

The sergeant answered that Puritans never drank, and put the crown piece into his pocket.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "what a fearful day, my dear D'Artagnan."

"What! a fearful day, when we have to-day found our friends."

"Yes; but under what circumstances?"

"'Tis true that our position is an awkward one; but let us go in and see more clearly what is to be done."

"Things look very bad," replied Porthos; "I understand now why Aramis advised me to strangle that horrible Mordaunt."

"Silence!" cried the Gascon; "do not utter that name."

"But," argued Porthos, "I speak French, and they are all English."

D'Artagnan looked at Porthos with that air of wonder which a sensible man cannot help feeling at stupidity in every degree.

But, as Porthos on his side could not comprehend his astonishment, he merely pushed him indoors, saying: "Let us go in."

They found Athos in a profound despondency. Aramis looked first at Porthos and then at D'Artagnan, without speaking; but the latter understood his meaning look.

"You want to know how we came here; 'tis easily guessed. Mazarin sent us with a letter to General Cromwell."

"But how came you to fall into company with Mordaunt, whom I bade you distrust?" asked Porthos.

"Mazarin again. Cromwell had sent him to Mazarin. Mazarin sent us to Cromwell. There has been a fate in it."

"Yes, you are right, D'Artagnan—a fate which will separate and ruin us; so, my dear Aramis, say no more about it, and let us prepare to submit to our destiny."

"Zounds! let us speak about things, on the contrary!—for we always agreed to keep on the same side; and here we are engaged in conflicting parties."

"Yes," added Athos, "I now ask you, D'Artagnan, what side you are on? Ah! behold for what end the wretched Mazarin has made use of you. Do you know in what crime you are to-day concerned? In the capture of a king, in his degradation, in his death."

"Oh! oh!" cried Porthos, "do you think so?"

"You are exaggerating, Athos; we are not so far gone as that," replied the lieutenant.

"Good heavens! we are on the very eve of it. I say why is the king taken prisoner? Those who wish to respect him as a master would not buy him as a slave."

"I don't say to the contrary," said D'Artagnan. "But what's that to us? I am here because I am a soldier, and have to obey orders; I have taken an oath to obey, and I do obey; but you, who have taken no oath, why are you here, and what cause do you serve?"

"That most sacred in the world," said Athos; "the cause of misfortune, of religion, of royalty. A friend, a wife, a daughter, have done us the honor to call us to their aid. We have served them to the best of our poor means, and God will recompense the will, and forgive the want of power: you may see matters differently, D'Artagnan, and think otherwise. I do not attempt to argue with you, but I blame you."

"Heyday!" cried D'Artagnan; "what matters it to me, after all, if Cromwell, who's an Englishman, revolts against his king, who is a Scotchman? I am myself a Frenchman, I have nothing to do with these things—why make me responsible for them?"

"Why you? Because you, D'Artagnan, a man sprung from the ancient nobility of France, bearing a good name, carrying a sword, have helped to give up a king to beersellers, shopkeepers, and wagoners. Ah! D'Artagnan! perhaps you have done your duty as a soldier, but, as a gentleman, I say that you are very culpable."

D'Artagnan was chewing the stalk of a flower, unable to reply, and very uncomfortable.

"And you, Porthos—you, a gentleman in manners—in tastes—in courage, are as much to blame as D'Artagnan."

Porthos colored, and hanging his head, said:

"Yes, yes, my dear count, I feel that you are right."

Athos rose.

"Come," he said, stretching out his hand to D'Artagnan, "come, don't be sullen, my dear son, for I have said all this to you, if not in the tone, at least with the feelings of a father. It would have been easier to me merely to have thanked you for preserving my life, and not to have uttered a word of all this."

"Doubtless, doubtless, Athos. But this is it—you have sentiments, the devil knows what, such as every one can't have. Who could suppose that a sensible man could leave his house in—France—his ward—a charming youth—for we saw him in the camp—to fly to the aid of a rotten, worm-eaten royalty, which is going to crumble one of these days like an old cask? The sentiments you sport are certainly fine—so fine that they are superhuman."

"However that may be, D'Artagnan," replied Athos, without falling into the snare which his Gascon friend had prepared for him by an appeal to his parental love, "whatsoever may be, you know, in the bottom of your heart, that it is true; but I am coming to dispute with my superiors. D'Artagnan, I am your prisoner—treat me as such."

D'Artagnan said nothing; but, after having gnawed the flower-stalk, he began to bite his nails. At last:

"Do you imagine," he resumed, "that they mean to kill you? And wherefore should they do so? What interest have they in your death? Moreover, you are *our* prisoners."

"Fool!" cried Aramis; "knowest thou not, then, Mordaunt? I have merely exchanged with him one look, but that look convinced me that we were doomed."

"The truth is, I'm very sorry that I did not strangle him as you advised me to do," said Porthos.

"Stop," cried Athos, extending his hand to one of the grated windows by which the room was lighted; "you will soon know what to expect, for here he is."

In fact, looking at the place to which Athos pointed, D'Artagnan saw a cavalier coming toward the house full gallop.

It was Mordaunt.

D'Artagnan rushed out of the room.

Porthos wanted to follow him.

"Stay," said D'Artagnan, "and do not come till you hear me beat like a drum with my fingers upon the door."

When Mordaunt arrived opposite the house he saw D'Artagnan upon the threshold, and the soldiers lying on the grass, here and there, with their arms.

"Halloo!" he cried, "are the prisoners still there?"

"Yes, sir," answered the sergeant, uncovering his head.

"'Tis well: order four men to conduct them to my lodging."

Four men prepared to do so.

"What do you want, sir?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Sir," replied Mordaunt, "I have ordered the two prisoners that we made this morning to be conducted to my lodging."

"Wherefore, sir? Excuse curiosity, but I wish to be enlightened on the subject."

"Because these prisoners, sir, are at my disposal, and I choose to dispose of them as I like."

"Allow me—allow me, sir," said D'Artagnan, "to observe you are in error. The prisoners belong to those who took them, and not to those who only saw them taken. You might have taken Lord de Winter—who, 'tis said, is your uncle—prisoner, but you preferred killing him; 'tis well—we, that is, Monsieur de Valon and I, could have killed our prisoners—we preferred taking them."

Mordaunt's very lips were white with rage.

D'Artagnan now saw that affairs were growing worse, and he beat the guard's march upon the door. At the first beat Porthos rushed out, and stood on the other side of the door.

This movement was observed by Mordaunt.

"Sir!" he thus addressed D'Artagnan, "your resistance is useless—these prisoners have just been given me by my illustrious patron, Oliver Cromwell."

These words struck D'Artagnan like a thunderbolt. The blood mounted to his temples, his eyes became dim; he saw from what source the ferocious hopes of the young man arose. He put his hand to the hilt of his sword.

As to Porthos, he looked inquiringly at D'Artagnan.

This look of Porthos' made the Gascon regret that he had summoned the brute force of his friend to aid him in an affair which seemed to require chiefly cunning.

"Violence," he said to himself, "would spoil all; D'Artag-

nan, my friend, prove to this young serpent that thou art not only stronger, but more subtle than he is."

"Ah!" he said, making a low bow, "why did you not begin by saying that, Monsieur Mordaunt? What! are you sent by General Oliver Cromwell, the most illustrious captain of his age?"

"I have this instant left him," replied Mordaunt, alighting, in order to give his horse to a soldier to hold.

"Why did you not say so at once, my dear sir! all England is with Cromwell; and since you ask for my prisoners, I bend, sir, to your wishes. They are yours; take them."

Mordaunt, delighted, advanced—Porthos looking at D'Artagnan with open-mouthed astonishment. Then D'Artagnan trod on his foot, and Porthos began to understand that this was all acting.

Mordaunt put his foot on the first step of the door, and, with his hat in his hand, prepared to pass by the two friends, motioning to the four men to follow him.

"But pardon me," he said, stopping short, "since the illustrious general has given my prisoners into your hands, he has of course confirmed that act in writing."

Mordaunt stood still, then retreated—cast a terrible glance at D'Artagnan, which was answered by the most amicable and friendly mien that could be imagined.

"Speak out, sir," said Mordaunt.

"Monsieur de Valon, yonder, is rich, and has forty thousand francs yearly, so he does not care about money. I do not speak for him, but for myself."

"Well, sir, what more?"

"Well—I—I'm not rich. In Gascony 'tis no dishonor, sir, nobody is rich; and Henry IV., of glorious memory, who was the king of the Gascons, as his majesty Philip IV. is the king of the Spaniards, never had a penny in his pocket."

"Go on, sir. I see where you wish to come to; and if it is what I think that stops you, I can obviate that difficulty."

"Ah, I knew well," said the Gascon, "that you were a man of talent. Well, here's the case; here's where the saddle hurts me, as we French say. I am an officer of fortune, nothing else; I have nothing but what my sword brings me in—that is to say, more blows than bank notes. Now, on taking prisoners this morning two Frenchmen, who seemed to me of high birth—in short, two knights of the Garter—I said to myself, my fortune is made."

Mordaunt, completely deceived by the wordy civility of D'Artagnan, smiled like a man who understands perfectly the reasons given him, and said:

"I shall have the order signed directly, sir, and with it two thousand pistoles; meanwhile, let me take these men away."

"No," replied D'Artagnan; "what signifies a delay of half an hour? I am a man of order, sir; let us do things in order."

"Nevertheless," replied Mordaunt, "I could compel you; I command here."

"Ah, sir!" said D'Artagnan, "I see that although we have had the honor of traveling in your company, you do not know us. We are gentlemen; we are, both of us, able to kill you and your eight men; we two only. For heaven's sake don't be obstinate, for when others are obstinate, I am obstinate likewise, and then I become ferocious and headstrong; and there is my friend, who is even more headstrong and ferocious than I am; besides, we are sent here by Cardinal Mazarin, and at this moment represent both the king and the cardinal, and are therefore, as ambassadors, able to act with impunity, a thing that General Oliver Cromwell, who is assuredly as great a politician as he is a general, is quite a man to understand. Ask him then for the written order. What will that cost you, my dear Monsieur Mordaunt?"

"Yes, the written order," said Porthos, who now began to comprehend what D'Artagnan was aiming at, "nothing but that will satisfy us."

However anxious Mordaunt was to have recourse to violence, he quite understood the reasons that D'Artagnan gave him; and, besides, completely ignorant of the friendship which existed between the four Frenchmen, all his uneasiness disappeared when he heard of the plausible motive of the ransom. He decided, therefore, not only to fetch the order, but the two thousand pistoles at which he estimated the prisoners. He therefore mounted his horse and disappeared.

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan; "a quarter of an hour to go to the tent, a quarter of an hour to return;" then turning without the least change of countenance to Porthos, he said, looking him full in the face, "Friend Porthos, listen to this: first, not a syllable to either of our friends about the service we are going to render them."

"Very well; I understand."

"Go to the stable; you will find Mousqueton there. Saddle your horses, put your pistols in your saddle-bags, take out the horses, and lead them to the street below this, so that there will be nothing to do but to mount them; all the rest is my business."

Porthos made no remark, but obeyed, with the sublime confidence that he had in his friend. He then proceeded, with his usual calm gait, to the stable, and went into the very midst of the soldiery, who, Frenchman, as he was, could not help admiring his height and the strength of his powerful limbs.

At the corner of the street he met Mousqueton and took him with him.

D'Artagnan, meantime, went into the house, whistling a tune which he had begun before Porthos went away. "My dear Athos, I have reflected on your arguments, and am convinced. I am sorry to have had anything to do with this matter. As you say, Mazarin is a knave. I have resolved to fly with you; not a word; be ready; your swords are in the corner; do not forget them, they are, in many circumstances, very useful; there's Porthos' purse, too."

He put it into his pocket. The two friends were perfectly stupefied.

"Well—pray is there anything to be so surprised at?" he said. "I was blind; Athos made me see clearly; that's all. Come here."

The two friends went near him.

"Do you see that street? There are the horses. Go out by the door, turn to the right, jump into your saddles, all will be right; don't be uneasy at anything except mistaking the signal. That will be the signal when I call out 'Mahomet!'"

"But give us your word that you will come too, D'Artagnan," said Athos.

"I swear I will, by heaven!"

"'Tis settled," said Aramis; "at the cry, 'Mahomet,' we go out, upset all that stands in our way, run to our horses, jump into our saddles, spur them—is that all?"

"Exactly."

"See Aramis, as I have told you, D'Artagnan is the best of us all," said Athos.

"Very true," replied the Gascon, "but I always run away from compliments. Don't forget the signal—Mahomet!" and he went out as he came in, whistling the air that he had been whistling when he came in.

The soldiers were playing or sleeping; two of them were singing in a corner, out of tune, the psalm—"On the rivers of Babylon."

D'Artagnan called the sergeant. "My dear friend, General Cromwell has sent Monsieur Mordaunt to fetch me. Guard the prisoners well, I beg of you."

The sergeant made a sign, as much as to say he did not understand French, and D'Artagnan tried to make him comprehend him by signs and gestures. Then he went into the stable; he found the five horses and his own, among others, saddled. He gave his instructions, and Porthos and Mousqueton went to their post according to his directions.

Then D'Artagnan, being alone, struck a light and lighted a small bit of the tinder, mounted his horse, and stopped at the door, in the midst of the soldiers. There, caressing, as he pretended, the animal with his hand, he put this bit of tinder, while burning, into his ear.

It was necessary to be as good a horseman as he was to risk such a scheme; for hardly had the animal felt the burning tinder than he uttered a cry of pain, and reared and jumped as if he had been mad.

The soldiers, whom he nearly trampled upon, ran away from him.

"Help! help!" cried D'Artagnan; "stop, my horse has the staggers."

In an instant blood came from his eyes, and he was white with foam.

"Help!" cried D'Artagnan. "What! will you let me be killed? By Mahomet!"

Scarcely had he uttered this cry than the door opened, and Athos and Aramis rushed out. The coast, owing to the Gascon's stratagem, was clear.

"The prisoners are escaping! the prisoners are escaping!" cried the sergeant.

"Stop! stop!" cried D'Artagnan, giving rein to his famous steed, who, darting forth, overturned several men.

"Stop! stop!" cried the soldiers, and ran for their arms.

But the prisoners were on their saddles, and lost no time, hastening to the nearest gate.

In the middle of the street they saw Grimaud and Blaisois, who were coming to find their masters. With one wave of his hand Athos made Grimaud, who followed the little troop, understand everything, and they passed on like a whirlwind, D'Artagnan still directing them from behind with his voice.

They passed through the gate like apparitions, without the guards thinking of detaining them, and reached the open country.

All this while the soldiers were calling out "Stop! stop!" and the sergeant, who began to see that he was the victim of an artifice, was almost in a frenzy of despair: while all this was going on, a cavalier in full gallop was seen approaching. It was Mordaunt with the order in his hand.

"The prisoners!" he exclaimed, jumping off his horse.

The sergeant had not the courage to reply; he showed him the open door and the empty room. Mordaunt darted to the steps—understood all, uttered a cry as if his very heart were pierced, and fell fainting on the stone steps.

CHAPTER LVII.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN THAT UNDER THE MOST TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES NOBLE NATURES NEVER LOSE THEIR COURAGE, NOR GOOD STOMACHS THEIR APPETITES.

THE little troop, without looking behind them, or exchanging a single word, fled at a rapid gallop, crossing on foot a little stream, of which none of them knew the name, and leaving on their left a town, which Athos declared to be Durham. At last they came in sight of a small wood, and spurring their horses afresh, they rode in the direction of it.

As soon as they had disappeared behind a green curtain sufficiently thick to conceal them from the sight of any who might be in pursuit of them, they drew up to hold a council together. The two grooms held the horses, that they might take rest without being unsaddled, and Grimaud was posted as sentinel.

"Come, first of all," said Athos to D'Artagnan, "my friend, that I may shake hands with you—you, our rescuer; you, the true hero among us all."

"Athos is right, and you have my admiration," said Aramis, in his turn pressing his hand; "to what are you not equal? with superior intelligence, and an infallible eye; an arm of iron, and an enterprising mind!"

"Now," said the Gascon, "that is all well, I accept for Porthos and myself everything—thanks and embracings—we have plenty of time to lose."

The two friends, recalled by D'Artagnan to what was also due to Porthos, pressed his hand in their turn.

"And now," said Athos, "it is not our plan to run anywhere, and like madmen; but we must arrange some plan. What shall we do?"

"What are we going to do, i'faith? It is not very difficult to say!"

"Tell us then, D'Artagnan."

"We are going to reach the nearest seaport, unite our little resources, hire a vessel, and return to France. As for

me, I will give my last sou for it. Life is the greatest treasure, and speaking candidly, ours is only held by a thread."

"What do you say to this, De Valon?"

"I," said Porthos—"I am entirely of D'Artagnan's opinion; this is a beastly country—this England."

"You are quite decided then to leave it?" asked Athos of D'Artagnan.

"Egad! I don't see what is to keep me here."

A glance was exchanged between Athos and Aramis.

"Go, then, my friends," said the former, sighing.

"How, go then?" exclaimed D'Artagnan. "Let us go, you mean!"

"No, my friend," said Athos, "you must leave us."

"Leave you!" cried D'Artagnan, quite bewildered at this unexpected announcement.

"Bahl!" said Porthos, "why separate, since we are all together?"

"Because you can, and you ought, to return to France; your mission is accomplished, but ours is not."

"Your mission is not accomplished!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, looking in astonishment at Athos.

"No, my good fellow," replied Athos, in his gentle, but decided voice, "we came here to defend King Charles; we have but ill defended him, it remains for us to save him."

"To save the king?" said D'Artagnan, looking at Aramis as he had looked at Athos.

Aramis contented himself by making a sign with his head.

D'Artagnan's countenance took an expression of the deepest compassion; he began to think he had to do with two madmen.

"You cannot be speaking seriously, Athos?" said he; "the king is surrounded by an army, which is conducting him to London. This army is commanded by a butcher, or the son of a butcher—it matters little—Colonel Harrison. His majesty, I can assure you, is about to be tried on his arrival in London; I have heard enough from the lips of Mr. Oliver Cromwell to know what to expect."

A second look was exchanged between Athos and Aramis.

"And when his trial is ended, there will be no delay in putting the sentence into execution," continued D'Artagnan.

"And to what penalty do you think the king will be condemned?" asked Athos.

"To the penalty of death, I much fear; they have gone too far for him to pardon them, and there is nothing left to them but one thing—and that is to kill him. Do you not

know Oliver Cromwell's speech when he came to Paris, and when he was shown the dungeon at Vincennes where Monsieur de Vendôme was imprisoned?"

"What was the speech?" asked Porthos.

"Princes must be knocked on the head."

"I remember it," said Athos.

"And you fancy he will not put his maxim into execution, now that he has hold of the king?"

"On the contrary, I am certain he will do so; but then there is the more reason why we must not abandon the august head so threatened."

"Athos, you are becoming mad."

"Well, you know beforehand that you must perish!" said D'Artagnan.

"We fear so, and our only regret is, to die so far from you both."

"What will you do in a foreign land—an enemy's country?"

"I have traveled in England when young—I speak English like an Englishman—and Aramis, too, knows something of the language. Ah! if we had you, my friends! With you, D'Artagnan, with you, Porthos—all four, and reunited for the first time for twenty years—we would dare, not only England, but the three kingdoms together!"

"And did you promise the queen," resumed D'Artagnan petulantly, "to storm the Tower of London with a hundred thousand soldiers, to fight victoriously against the wishes of a nation and the ambition of a man, and when that man is called Cromwell? Do not exaggerate your duty. In heaven's name, my dear Athos, do not make a useless sacrifice. When I see you merely, you look like a reasonable being; when you speak, I seem to have to do with a madman. Come, Porthos, join me; say, frankly, what do you think of this business?"

"Nothing good," replied Porthos.

"Come," continued D'Artagnan, who, irritated, that instead of listening to him, Athos seemed to be attending to his own thoughts, "you have never found yourself the worse for my advice. Well, then, believe me, Athos, your mission is ended, and ended nobly—return to France with us."

"Friend," said Athos, "our resolution is unchangeable."

"Then you have some other motive unknown to us?"

Athos smiled, and D'Artagnan struck his heels in anger, and muttered the most convincing reasons that he could discover; but to all these reasons Athos contented himself by

replying with a calm, sweet smile, and Aramis by nodding his head.

"Very well," cried D'Artagnan at last, furious, "very well, since you wish it, let us leave our bones in this beggarly land, where it is always cold—where the fine weather comes after a fog, and a fog after rain—and the rain after the deluge—where the sun represents the moon, and the moon a cream cheese; in truth, whether we die here or elsewhere, matters little, since we must die."

"Only reflect, my good fellow," said Athos, "it is but dying rather sooner."

"Pooh! a little sooner, or a little later, that isn't worth quarreling about."

"But your future career, D'Artagnan—your ambition, Porthos?"

"Our future, our ambition," cried D'Artagnan, with feverish volubility; "need we think of that since we are to save the king? The king saved—we shall assemble our friends together—we will head the Puritans—re-conquer England; we shall re-enter London—place him securely on his throne——"

"And he will make us dukes and peers," said Porthos, whose eyes sparkled with joy at this imaginary prospect.

"Or he will forget us," added D'Artagnan.

"Well, then," said Athos, offering his hand to D'Artagnan.

"'Tis settled," replied D'Artagnan. "I find England a charming country, and I stay—but only on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That I am not forced to learn English!"

"Well, then, now," said Athos triumphantly, "I swear to you, my friend, by the God who hears us, I believe that there is a power watching over us, and I hope we shall all four meet in France."

"So be it!" said D'Artagnan, "but I—I confess I have quite a contrary conviction."

"Our good D'Artagnan," said Aramis, "represents among us the opposition in parliament, which says always *no*, and does always *ay*."

"But which in the meantime saves the country," added Athos.

"Well, now that everything is decided," cried Porthos, rubbing his hands, "suppose we think of dinner! It seems to me that in the most critical positions of our lives we have always dined."

"Oh! yes, speak of dinner in a country where for a feast

they eat boiled mutton, and where as a treat they drink beer. What the devil did you come to such a country for, Athos?"

"But, I forgot," added the Gascon, smiling, "pardon, I forgot you are no longer Athos; but never mind, let us hear your plan for dinner, Porthos."

"My plan!"

"Yes; have you a plan?"

"No! I am hungry, that is all."

"*Pardieu*, if that is all, I am hungry too; but it is not everything to be hungry; one must find something to eat, unless we browse on the grass, like our horses——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Aramis, who was not quite so indifferent to the good things of the earth as Athos, "do you remember, when we were at Gravesend, the beautiful oysters that we ate?"

"And the legs of mutton of the salt marshes," said Porthos, smacking his lips.

"But," suggested D'Artagnan, "have we not our friend Mousqueton, he who managed for us so well at Chantilly, Porthos?"

"By the by," said Porthos, "we have Mousqueton, but since he has been steward, he has become very heavy; never mind, let us call him; and to make sure that he will reply agreeably—Here! Mouston," cried Porthos.

Mouston appeared, with a very piteous face.

"What is the matter, my dear Mr. Mouston?" asked D'Artagnan. "Are you ill?"

"Sir, I am very hungry!" replied Mouston.

"Well, it is just for that reason that we have called you, my good Mr. Mouston. Could you not procure us a few of those nice little rabbits and some of those delicious partidges, of which you used to make fricassees at the hotel——? Faith, I do not remember the name of the hotel."

"At the hotel of ——," said Porthos, "by my faith—nor do I remember it either."

"It does not matter; and a few of those bottles of old Burgundy wine, which cured your master so quickly of his sprain!"

"Alas! sir," said Mousqueton, "I much fear that what you ask for are very rare things in this frightful country, and I think we should do better to go and seek hospitality from the owner of a little house that we see at the extremity of the wood."

"How! is there a house in the neighborhood?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, sir!" replied Mousqueton.

"Well, let us, as you say, go and ask a dinner from the master of that house. What is your opinion, gentlemen, and does not Mr. Mouston's suggestion appear to you full of sense?"

"Oh! oh!" said Aramis, "suppose the master is a Puritan?"

"So much the better, *Mordieux!*" replied D'Artagnan; "if he is a Puritan, we will inform him of the capture of the king, and in honor of the news he will kill for us his white hens."

"But if he should be a cavalier?" said Porthos.

"In that case, we will put on an air of mourning, and we will pluck his black fowls."

"You are very happy," exclaimed Athos, laughing in spite of himself, at the sally of the irresistible Gascon; "for you see the bright side of everything."

"What would you have?" said D'Artagnan. "I come from a land where there is not a cloud in the sky."

"It is not like this, then," said Porthos, stretching out his hand to assure himself whether a sensation of freshness which he had just felt on his cheek was not really caused by a drop of rain.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan, "more reason why we should start on our journey—holloa, Grimaud!"

Grimaud appeared.

"Well, Grimaud, my friend, have you seen anything?" asked the Gascon.

"Nothing!" replied Grimaud.

"Those idiots!" cried Porthos, "they have not even pursued us. Oh! if we had been in their place!"

"Yes, they are wrong," said D'Artagnan. "I would willingly have said two words to Mordaunt in this little Thebes. See what a nice place for bringing down a man properly."

"I think, decidedly," observed Aramis, "gentlemen, that the son is not so bad as his mother."

"What, my good fellow!" replied Athos; "wait awhile, we have scarcely left him two hours ago—he does not know yet in what direction we came, nor where we are. We may say that he is not equal to his mother when we put foot in France, if we are not poisoned nor killed before then."

"Meanwhile, let us dine," suggested Porthos.

"I'faith, yes!" said Athos, "for I am very hungry."

"Look out for the black fowls!" cried Aramis.

And the four friends, guided by Mousqueton, took up the way toward the house, already almost restored to their

former gayety; for they were now, as Athos had said, all four united and of one mind.

CHAPTER LVIII.

RESPECT TO FALLEN MAJESTY.

AS OUR fugitives approached the house, they found the ground cut up, as if a considerable body of horsemen had preceded them. Before the door, the traces were yet more apparent; these horsemen, whoever they might be, had halted there.

"Egad!" cried D'Artagnan, "it's quite clear that the king and his escort have been by here."

He pushed open the door, and found the first room empty and deserted.

"Well!" cried Porthos.

"I can see nobody," said D'Artagnan. "Aha!"

"What?"

"Blood!"

At this word the three friends leaped from their horses and entered. D'Artagnan had already opened the door of the second room, and, from the expression on his face, it was clear that he there beheld some extraordinary object.

The three friends drew near, and discovered a young man stretched on the ground, and bathed in a pool of blood. It was evident that he had attempted to regain his bed, but had not had the strength to do so.

Athos, who imagined that he saw him move, was the first to go up to him.

"Well?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"Well, if he is dead," said Athos, "he has not been so long, for he is still warm. But no, his heart is beating. Eh! there, my friend."

The wounded man heaved a sigh. D'Artagnan took some water in the hollow of his hand, and threw it upon his face. The man opened his eyes, made an effort to raise his head, and fell back again. The wound was in the top of the skull, and the blood was flowing copiously.

Aramis dipped a cloth in some water, and applied it to the gash. Again the wounded man opened his eyes, and looked in astonishment at these strangers, who appeared to pity him.

"You are among friends," said Athos, in English; "so cheer up, and tell us, if you have the strength to do so, what has happened."

"The king," muttered the wounded man, "the king is a prisoner."

"Make your mind easy," resumed Athos, "we are all faithful servants of his majesty."

"Is what you tell me true?" asked the wounded man.

"On our honor as gentlemen."

"Then I may tell you all. I am the brother of Parry, his majesty's lackey."

Athos and Aramis remembered that this was the name by which De Winter had called the man whom they had found in the passage of the king's tent.

"We know him," said Athos; "he never left the king."

"Yes, that is he; well, he thought of me, when he saw that the king was taken, and as they were passing before the house here, he begged in the king's name that they would stop, as the king was hungry. They brought him into this room, and placed sentinels at the doors and windows. Parry knew this room, as he had often been to see me when the king was at Newcastle. He knew that there was a trap-door communicating with a cellar, from which one could get into the orchard. He made me a sign, which I understood, but the king's guards must have noticed it, and put themselves on their guard. I went out, as if to fetch wood, passed through the subterranean passage into the cellar, and while Parry was gently bolting the door, pushed up the board, and beckoned to the king to follow me. Alas! he would not. But Parry clasped his hands and implored him, and at last he agreed. I went on first, quite delighted. The king was a few steps behind me, when suddenly I saw something rise up in front of me, like a huge shadow. I wanted to cry out to warn the king, but the same moment I felt a blow as if the house was falling on my head, and fell insensible. When I came to myself again, I was stretched in the same place. I dragged myself as far as the yard. The king and his escort were gone."

"And now what can we do for you?" asked Athos.

"Help me to get on to the bed; that will ease me."

They helped him on to the bed, and, calling Grimaud to dress his wound, returned to the outer room to consult.

"Now," said Aramis, "we know how the matter stands. The king and his escort have gone this way; we had better take the opposite direction, eh?"

"Yes," said Porthos; "if we follow the escort we shall find everything devoured, and die of hunger. What a confounded country this England is! This is the first time I shall have lost my dinner, and it's my best meal."

"What do you say about it, D'Artagnan," said Athos.

"Just the contrary to Aramis."

"What! follow the escort?" cried Porthos, quite alarmed.

"No, but join them. They will never look for us among the Puritans!"

"A good idea," said Athos, "they will think we want to leave England, and seek us in the ports. Meanwhile we shall reach London with the king, and, once there, it is not difficult to conceal one's self."

"But," said Aramis, "sha'n't we be suspected by Colonel Harrison?"

"Egad!" cried D'Artagnan, "he's just the man I count upon. Colonel Harrison is one of our friends. We have met him twice at General Cromwell's. He knows that we were sent from France by Monsieur Mazarin; he will consider us as brothers. Besides, is he not a butcher's son! Well, then, Porthos will show him how to knock down an ox with a blow of the fist; and I, how to trip up a bull by taking him by the horns. That will ensure his confidence."

Athos smiled.

At this moment Grimaud came in. He had stanchd the wound and the man was better.

The little troop recommenced their march, and, at the end of two hours, perceived a considerable body of horsemen about half a league ahead.

"My dear friends," said D'Artagnan, "give your swords to Monsieur Mouston, who will return them to you in proper time and place, and do not forget you are our prisoners."

It was not long ere they joined the escort. The king was in the front, surrounded by troopers, and when he saw Athos and Aramis a glow of pleasure lighted up his pale cheeks.

D'Artagnan passed to the head of the column, and, leaving his friends under the guard of Porthos, went straight to Harrison, who recognized him as having met him at Cromwell's, and received him as politely as a man of his breeding and disposition could. It turned out as D'Artagnan had foreseen. The colonel neither had nor could have any suspicion.

They halted for the king to dine. This time, however, due precautions were taken to prevent any attempt at escape. In the large room of the hotel a small table was placed for him, and a large one for the officers.

"Will you dine with me?" asked Harrison of D'Artagnan.

"Gad, I should be very happy, but I have my companion, Monsieur de Valon, and the two prisoners, whom I cannot leave. Let us manage it better. Have a table set for us in a corner, and hand us whatever you like from yours."

"Good," answered Harrison.

The table at which the Puritan officers were seated was round, and whether by chance or a coarse intention, Harrison had his back turned to the king.

The king saw the four gentlemen come in, but appeared to take no notice of them.

They sat down in such a manner as to turn their backs upon nobody.

"I'faith, colonel," said D'Artagnan, "we are very grateful for your gracious invitation; for, without you, we ran the risk of going without dinner, as we have without breakfast. My friend here, Monsieur de Valon, shares my gratitude, for he was particularly hungry."

"And I am so still," said Porthos, bowing to Harrison.

"And how," said Harrison, laughing, "did this serious calamity of going without breakfast happen to you?"

"In a very simple manner, colonel," said D'Artagnan. "I was in a hurry to join you, and took the road you had already gone by. You can understand our disappointment when, arriving at a pretty little house on the skirts of a wood, which at a distance had quite a gay appearance with its red roof and green shutters, we found nothing but a poor wretch bathed— Ah! colonel, pay my respects to the officer of yours who struck that blow."

"Yes," said Harrison, laughing, and looking over at one of the officers seated at his table. "When Groslow undertakes this kind of thing, there's no need to go over the ground after him."

"Ah! it's that gentleman?" said D'Artagnan, bowing to the officer. "I am sorry he does not speak French, that I might offer him my compliments."

"I am ready to receive and return them, sir," said the officer, in pretty good French. "For I resided three years in Paris."

"Then, sir, allow me to assure you that your blow was so well directed that you have nearly killed your man."

"Nearly? I thought it was quite," said Groslow.

"No. It was a very near thing, but he is not dead."

As he said this, D'Artagnan gave a glance at Parry, who was standing in front of the king, to show him that the news was meant for him.

The king, too, who had listened in the greatest agony, now breathed again.

"Hang it," said Groslow, "I thought I had succeeded better. If it were not so far from here to the house, I would return and finish him."

"And you would do well, if you are afraid of his recovering; for you know, if a wound in the head does not kill at once, it is cured in a week."

And D'Artagnan threw a second glance toward Parry, on whose face such an expression of joy was manifested that Charles stretched out his hand to him, smiling.

Parry bent over his master's hand, and kissed it respectfully.

"I have a great desire to drink the king's health," said Athos.

"Let me propose it, then," said D'Artagnan.

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan, quite amazed at the resources with which his companion's Gascon sharpness continually supplied him.

D'Artagnan took his tin cup, filled it, and rose.

"Gentlemen," said he, "Let us drink to him who presides at our repast. Here's to our colonel, and let him know that we are always at his commands, as far as London, and further."

And as D'Artagnan, as he spoke, looked at Harrison, the colonel imagined the toast was for himself. He rose and bowed to the four friends, whose eyes were fixed on Charles, while Harrison emptied his glass without the slightest misgiving.

The king, in return, looked at the four gentlemen, and drank, with a smile full of nobleness and gratitude.

"Come, gentlemen," cried Harrison, quite regardless of his illustrious captive, "let us be off."

"Where do we sleep, colonel?"

"At Thirsk," replied Harrison.

"Parry," said the king, rising too, "my horse; I desire to go to Thirsk."

"Egad," said D'Artagnan to Athos; "your king has thoroughly taken me, and I am quite at his service."

"If what you say is sincere," replied Athos, "he will never reach London."

"How so?"

"Because, before then, we shall have carried him off."

"Well, this time, Athos," said D'Artagnan, "upon my word you are mad."

"Have you some plan in your head, then?" asked Aramis.

"Ay," said Porthos, "the thing would not be impossible with a good plan."

"I have none," said Athos, "but D'Artagnan will discover one."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders and went on.

CHAPTER LIX.

D'ARTAGNAN HITS ON A PLAN.

AS NIGHT closed in they arrived at Thirsk.

D'Artagnan was thoughtful, and seemed for the moment to have lost his usual loquacity. Porthos, who could never see anything that was not self-evident, talked to him as usual. He replied in monosyllables, and Athos and Aramis looked significantly at one another.

Next morning, D'Artagnan was the first to rise. He had gone down to the stables, had already had a look at the horses, and given all the necessary orders for the day, while Athos and Aramis were still in bed, and Porthos snoring.

At eight o'clock, the march was resumed in the same order as the night before, except that D'Artagnan left his friends and began to renew the acquaintance which he had already struck up with Monsieur Groslow.

"Really, sir," D'Artagnan said to him, "I am happy to find some one with whom to talk in my own [poor] tongue. My friend, Monsieur de Valon, is of a very melancholy disposition—so much so, that one can scarcely get three words a day out of him. As for our two prisoners, you can imagine that they are but little in the humor for conversation."

"They are hot Royalists," said Groslow.

"The more reason they should be sulky with us for having captured the Stuart, for whom, I hope, you are preparing a pretty trial."

"Why," said Groslow, "that's just what we are taking him to London for."

"And you don't lose sight of him, I presume?"

"I should think not, indeed. You see he has a truly royal escort."

"Ay, there's no fear in the daytime; but at night."

"We double our precautions."

"And what method of surveillance do you employ?"

"Eight men remain constantly in his room."

"The deuce, he is well guarded then. But, besides these eight men, you doubtless place some guard outside?"

"Oh, no! Just think. What would you have two men without arms do against eight armed men?"

"Two men—how do you mean?"

"Yes, the king and his lackey."

"Oh! then they allow the lackey to remain with him?"

"Yes; Stuart begged for this favor, and Harrison con-

sented. Under pretence that he's a king, it appears he cannot dress or undress without assistance."

"Really, captain," said D'Artagnan, determined to continue on the laudatory tack on which he had commenced—"the more I listen to you, the more surprised I am at the easy and elegant manner in which you speak French. You have lived three years in Paris? May I ask what you were doing there?"

"My father, who is a merchant, placed me with his correspondent, who, in turn, sent his son to my father's."

"Were you pleased with Paris, sir?"

"Yes, but you are much in want of a revolution like ours; not against your king, who is merely a child, but against that lazar of an Italian, the queen's favorite."

"Ah! I am quite of your opinion, sir; and we should soon make an end of Mazarin, if we had only a dozen officers like yourself, without prejudices, vigilant, and incorruptible."

"But," said the officer, "I thought you were in his service, and that it was he who had sent you to General Cromwell?"

"That is to say I am in the king's service, and that knowing he wanted to send some one to England, I solicited the appointment, so great was my desire to know the man of genius who now governs the three kingdoms. So that when he proposed to us to draw our swords in honor of Old England, you see how we snatched at the proposition."

"Yes, I know that you charged by the side of Mordaunt."

"On his right and left, sir. Ah! that's another brave and excellent young man."

"Do you know him?" asked the officer.

"Yes, very well. Monsieur de Valon and myself came from France with him."

"It appears, too, you kept him waiting a long time at Boulogne."

"What would you have? I was like you, and had a king in keeping."

"Aha!" said Groslow; "what king?"

"Our own, to be sure—the little one. Louis XIV."

"And how long had you to take care of him?"

"Three nights; and, by my troth, I shall always remember those three nights with pleasure."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that my friends, officers in the guards and 'Mousquetaires,' came to keep me company, and we passed the night in eating and play."

"Ah! true," said the Englishman, with a sigh, "you Frenchmen are jovial boon companions."

"And don't you play, too, when you are on guard?"

"Never," said the Englishman.

"In that case you must be horribly bored, and I pity you."

"The fact is, I look to my turn for keeping guard with horror. It's tiresome work to keep awake a whole night."

"Yes; but with a jovial partner, and the gold and dice rolling on the table, the night passes like a dream. You don't like playing then?"

"On the contrary, I do."

"Lansquenet, for instance?"

"I'm devoted to it. I used to play almost every night in France."

"And since your return to England?"

"I have not handled a single card or dice-box."

"I sincerely pity you," said D'Artagnan, with an air of profound compassion.

"Look here," said the Englishman.

"Well?"

"To-morrow I am on guard."

"In Stuart's room?"

"Yes; come and pass the night with me?"

"Impossible!"

"Impossible! why so?"

"I play with Monsieur de Valon every night. Sometimes we don't go to bed at all."

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, he would be annoyed if I did not play with him?"

"Does he play well?"

"I have seen him lose as much as two thousand pistoles—laughing all the while till the tears rolled down."

"Bring him with you, then."

"But how about our prisoners?"

"Let your servants guard them."

"Yes, and give them a chance of escaping," said D'Artagnan. "Why, one of them is a rich lord from Touraine, and the other a knight of Malta, of noble family. We have arranged the ransom of each of them—£2,000 on arriving in France."

"Aha!" exclaimed Groslow. "But come," he continued, "are they dangerous men?"

"In what respect?"

"Are they capable of attempting violence?"

D'Artagnan burst out laughing at the idea.

"Well, then," said Groslow, "bring them with you."

"But really——" said D'Artagnan.

"I have eight men on guard, you know. Four of them can guard the king, and the other four your prisoners. I shall manage it somehow, you will see."

"But," said D'Artagnan, "now I think of it—what is to prevent our beginning to-night?"

"Nothing at all," said Groslow.

"Just so. Come to us this evening, and to-morrow we'll return your visit."

"Capital! This evening with you, to-morrow at Stuart's, the next day with me."

"You see one can lead a merry life everywhere," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, with Frenchmen, and Frenchmen like you."

"And Monsieur de Valon," added the other. "You will see what a fellow he is; a man who nearly killed Mazarin between two doors. They employ him because they are afraid of him. Ah, there he is, calling me now. You'll excuse me, I know."

They exchanged bows, and D'Artagnan returned to his companions.

"What on earth can you have been saying to that bulldog?" exclaimed Porthos.

"My dear fellow, don't speak like that of Monsieur Groslow. He's one of my intimate friends.

"One of your friends!" cried Porthos; "this butcherer of peasants!"

"Hush! my dear Porthos. Monsieur Groslow is perhaps rather quick, it's true, but at bottom I have discovered good qualities in him. He is conceited and stupid."

Porthos opened his eyes in amazement; Athos and Aramis looked at one another and smiled.

"But," continued D'Artagnan, "you shall judge of him for yourself. He is coming to play with us this evening."

"Oho!" said Porthos, his eyes glistening at the news. "Is he rich?"

"He's the son of one of the wealthiest merchants in London."

"And knows lansquenet?"

"He adores it."

"Basset?"

"His mania."

"Biribi?"

"He revels in it."

"Good," said Porthos; "we shall pass an agreeable evening."

"The more so, as it will be the prelude to a better."

"How so?"

"We invite him to play to-night; he has invited us in return for to-morrow. But wait. To-night we stop at Derby; and if there is a bottle of wine in the town, let Mousqueton buy it. It will be well, too, to prepare a light supper, of which you, Athos and Aramis, are not to partake. Athos, because I told him you had a fever; Aramis, because you are a knight of Malta, and won't mix with fellows like us. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Porthos; "but deuce take me if I understand at all."

"Porthos, my friend, you know that I am descended on the father's side from the Prophets, and on the mother's from the Sybils, and that I only speak in parables and riddles. That is all I can say for the present."

"The fact is," said Porthos, with an air of finesse, "I am rather incredulous."

D'Artagnan gave him a clap on the shoulder, and as they had reached the station where they were to breakfast, the conversation ended there.

At five in the evening they sent Mousqueton on before, as agreed upon.

In crossing the principal street in Derby, the four friends perceived their man standing in the doorway of a handsome house. It was there that their lodging was prepared for them.

At the hour agreed upon Groslow came. D'Artagnan received him as he would have done a friend of twenty years' standing. Porthos scanned him from head to foot, and smiled when he discovered, that in spite of the blow he had administered to Parry's brother, he was not so strong as himself.

Athos and Aramis kept to the parts they had to play, and at midnight they retired to their room, leaving the door open. D'Artagnan accompanied them, and left Porthos to win fifty pistoles of Groslow, and to come to the conclusion when he left, that he was not such bad company as he had first imagined.

Groslow left with the determination of retrieving his losses the next night, and reminded the Gascon of the appointment.

The day passed as usual. In his ordinary relations D'Ar-

tagnan was the same as ever; but with his friends, that is to say, Athos and Aramis, his gayety was at fever heat.

Arrived at Ryston, D'Artagnan assembled his friends. His face had lost the expression of careless gayety which it had worn like a mask the whole day. Athos pinched Aramis' hand.

"The moment is at hand," he said.

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, who had overheard him, "to-night, gentlemen, we rescue the king."

"D'Artagnan," said Athos, "this is not a joke, I trust? It would quite cut me up."

"You are very odd, Athos," he replied, "to doubt me thus. Where and when have you seen me trifle with a friend's heart and a king's life? I have told you, and I repeat it, that to-night we rescue Charles I. You left it to me to discover the means of doing so, and I have done so."

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan with an expression of profound admiration. Aramis smiled as one who hopes. Athos was pale, and trembled in every limb.

"Speak," said Athos.

"We are invited," replied D'Artagnan, "to pass the night with Mr. Groslow. But do you know where?"

"No."

"In the king's room."

"The king's room?" cried Athos.

"Yes, gentlemen, in the king's room. Groslow is on guard there this evening, and, to pass his time, has invited us to keep him company."

"Aha!" exclaimed Aramis.

"We are going, then—we two with our swords, you with daggers. We four are to make ourselves masters of these eight fools and their stupid captain. Monsieur Porthos, what do you say to it?"

"That it is easy enough," answered Porthos.

"We dress the king in Groslow's clothes. Mousqueton, Grimaud, and Blaisois have our horses saddled at the end of the first street. We mount them, and before daylight are twenty leagues distant."

Athos placed his two hands on D'Artagnan's shoulders, and gazed at him with his calm, mild smile.

"I declare, my friend," said he, "that there is not a creature under the sky who equals you in prowess and courage."

"And to think that I couldn't find that out," said Porthos, scratching his head; "it is so simple."

"But," said Aramis, "if I understand rightly, we are to kill them all, eh?"

Athos shuddered and turned pale.

"*Mordieux*," answered D'Artagnan; "I believe we must. I confess I can discover no help for it."

"Let us see," said Aramis, "how are we to act?"

"I have arranged two plans. Firstly, at a given signal, which shall be the words 'At last,' you each plunge a dagger into the heart of the soldier nearest to you. We, on our side, do the same. That will be four killed. We shall then be matched—four against the remaining five. If those five give themselves up we gag them, if they resist we kill them."

"Very good," said Porthos; "it will be a nice little throat-cutting."

"Horrible! horrible!" exclaimed Athos.

"Nonsense," said D'Artagnan; "you would do as much, Mr. Sensitive, in a battle. But, if you think the king's life is not worth what it must cost, there's an end of the matter, and I send to Groslow to say I am ill."

"No, you are right," said Athos.

At this moment a soldier entered to inform them that Groslow was waiting for them.

"Where?" asked D'Artagnan.

"In the room of the English Nebuchadnezzar," replied the staunch Puritan.

"Good," replied Athos, whose blood mounted to his face at the insult offered to royalty; "tell the captain we are coming."

"Faith," said Groslow, as the four friends entered, "I had almost given you up."

D'Artagnan went up to him, and whispered in his ear:

"The fact is we, that is, Monsieur de Valon and I, hesitated a little."

"And why?"

D'Artagnan looked significantly toward Athos and Aramis.

"Aha," said Groslow, "on account of opinions? No matter. On the contrary," he added, laughing, "if they want to see their Stuart they shall see him."

"Are we to pass the night in the king's room?" asked D'Artagnan.

"No, but in the one next to it; and as the door will remain open, it's the same thing. Have you provided yourself with money? I assure you I intend to play the devil's game to-night."

D'Artagnan rattled the gold in his pockets.

"Very good," said Groslow, and opened the door of the room.

"I will show you the way," and he went in first.

D'Artagnan turned to look at his friends. Porthos was perfectly indifferent; Athos pale, but resolute. Aramis was wiping a slight moisture from his brow.

The eight guards were at their posts—four in the king's room, two at the door between the rooms, and two at that by which the friends had entered. Athos smiled when he saw their bare swords; he felt it was no longer to be a butchery but a fight, and his usual good humor returned to him.

Charles was perceived through the door, lying dressed upon his bed, at the head of which Parry was seated, reading, in a low voice, a chapter from the Bible.

A candle of coarse tallow on a black table lit up the resigned face of the king, and that of his faithful retainer, far less calm.

From time to time Parry stopped, thinking the king, whose eyes were closed, was really asleep, but Charles would open his eyes, and say with a smile:

"Go on, my good Parry, I am listening."

Groslow advanced to the door of the king's room, replaced on his head the hat which he had taken off to receive his guests, looked for a moment contemptuously at this simple and touching scene, and, turning again to D'Artagnan, assumed an air of triumph at what he had achieved.

"Capital," cried the Gascon, "you would make a distinguished general."

"And do you think," asked Groslow, "that the Stuart will ever escape while I am guard?"

"No, to be sure," replied D'Artagnan; "unless, forsooth, the sky rains friends upon him."

Groslow's face brightened.

It is impossible to say whether Charles, who kept his eyes constantly closed, had noticed the insolence of the Puritan captain, but the moment he heard the clear tone of D'Artagnan's voice, his eyelids rose in spite of himself.

Parry, too, started and stopped reading.

"What are you thinking about?" said the king; "go on, my good Parry, unless, at least, you are tired."

Parry resumed his reading.

On a table in the next room were lighted candles, cards, two dice-boxes and dice.

"That's it," said D'Artagnan; "you, Monsieur le Comte de la Fère to the right of Monsieur Groslow. You, Chevalier

d'Herblay to his left. De Valon next to me. You'll bet for me, and those gentlemen for Monsieur Groslow."

By this arrangement D'Artagnan could nudge Porthos with his knee, and make signs with the eyes to Athos and Aramis.

At the names of Comte de la Fère and Chevalier d'Herblay, Charles opened his eyes, and raising his noble head in spite of himself, threw a glance at all the actors in the scene.

"You asked me just now if I was in funds," said D'Artagnan, placing some twenty pistoles upon the table; "well, in my turn I advise you to keep a sharp lookout on your TREASURE, my dear Monsieur Groslow, for I can tell you we shall not leave this without robbing you of it."

"Not without my defending it," said Groslow.

"So much the better," said D'Artagnan. "Fight, my dear captain, fight. You know, or you don't know, that that is what we ask of you."

"Oh! yes," said Groslow, bursting with his usual hoarse laugh, "I know you Frenchmen want nothing but cuts and bruises."

Charles had heard and understood it all. A slight color mounted to his cheeks. The soldiers then saw him stretch his limbs little by little, and under the pretence of much heat, throw off the Scotch plaid which covered him.

Athos and Aramis started with delight to find that the king was lying with his clothes on.

The game began. The luck had turned, and Groslow having won some hundred pistoles, was in the merriest possible humor.

Porthos, who had lost the fifty pistoles he had won the night before, and thirty more besides, was very cross, and questioned D'Artagnan with a nudge of the knee, as to whether it would not soon be time to change the game. But D'Artagnan remained impassable.

It struck ten. They heard the guard going its rounds.

"How many rounds do they make a night?" asked D'Artagnan, drawing more pistoles from his pocket.

"Five," answered Groslow, "one every two hours."

D'Artagnan glanced at Athos and Aramis, and for the first time replied to Porthos' nudge of the knee by a nudge responsive. Meanwhile the soldiers, whose duty it was to remain in the king's room, attracted by that love of play so powerful in all men, had stolen little by little toward the table, and standing on tiptoe, were watching the game over the

shoulders of D'Artagnan and Porthos. Those on the other side had followed their example, thus favoring the views of the four friends.

D'Artagnan turned, mechanically looking behind him, and between the figures of two soldiers he could see Parry standing up, and Charles leaning on his elbow, with his hands clasped, and apparently offering a fervent prayer to God.

D'Artagnan saw that the moment was come. He darted a preparatory glance at Athos and Aramis, who gently pushed back their chairs a little so as to leave themselves space for action. He gave Porthos a second nudge of the knee; and Porthos got up as if to stretch his legs, and took care at the same time to ascertain that his sword could be drawn glibly from the scabbard.

"Hang it," cried D'Artagnan; "another twenty pistoles lost. Really Captain Groslow, you are too much in luck's way. This can't last," and he drew another twenty from his pocket. "One more turn, captain, twenty pistoles on one throw—only one, the last."

"Done for twenty," replied Groslow.

And he turned up two cards as usual, a king for D'Artagnan, and an ace for himself.

"A king," said D'Artagnan; "it's a good omen, Master Groslow, look out for the king."

And in spite of his power over himself, there was a strange vibration in the Gascon's voice, which made his partner start.

Groslow began turning the cards one after another. If he turned up an ace first, he won; if a king, he lost.

He turned up a king.

"At last!" cried D'Artagnan.

At this word Athos and Aramis jumped up. Porthos drew back a step. Daggers and swords were just about to shine, when suddenly the door was thrown open, and Harrison appeared in the doorway, accompanied by a man enveloped in a large cloak. Behind this man could be seen the glistening muskets of five or six soldiers.

Groslow jumped up, ashamed at being surprised in the midst of wine, cards, and dice. But Harrison paid no attention to him, and entering the king's room, followed by his companion—

"Charles Stuart," said he, "an order has come to conduct you to London without stopping day or night. Prepare yourself, then, to start at once."

"And by whom is this order given?" asked the king.

"By General Oliver Cromwell. And here is Mr. Mordaunt, who has brought it, and is charged with its execution."

"Mordaunt!" muttered the four friends, exchanging looks.

D'Artagnan swept up the money that he and Porthos had lost, and buried it in his huge pocket. Athos and Aramis placed themselves behind him. At this moment Mordaunt turned round, recognized them, and uttered an exclamation of savage delight.

"I'm afraid we are taken," whispered D'Artagnan to his friend.

"Not yet," replied Porthos.

"Colonel, colonel," cried Mordaunt, "you are betrayed. These four Frenchmen have escaped from Newcastle, and no doubt want to carry off the king. Arrest them."

"Ah! my young man," said D'Artagnan, drawing his sword, "that is an order sooner given than executed. Fly, friends, fly," he added, whirling his sword around him.

The next moment he darted to the door and knocked down two of the soldiers who guarded it, before they had time to cock their muskets. Athos and Aramis followed him, Porthos brought up the rear, and before soldiers, officers, or colonel had time to recover their surprise, all four were in the street.

"Fire!" cried Mordaunt; "fire upon them."

Three or four shots were fired, but with no other result than to show the four fugitives turning the corner of the street safe and sound.

The horses were at the place fixed upon, and they leaped lightly into their saddles.

"Forward!" cried D'Artagnan, "and put the spur in."

They galloped away, and took the road they had come by in the morning, namely, in the direction toward Scotland. A few yards beyond the town D'Artagnan drew rein.

"Halt!" he cried; "this time we shall be pursued. We must let them leave the village and ride after us on the northern road, and when they are passed we will take the opposite direction."

There was a stream close by, and a bridge across it. D'Artagnan led his horse under the arch of the bridge. The others followed. Ten minutes later they heard the rapid gallop of a troop of horsemen. A few minutes more, and the troop passed over their heads.

CHAPTER LX.

LONDON.

AS SOON as the noise of the hoofs was lost in the distance, D'Artagnan remounted the bank of the stream and scoured the plain, followed by his three friends, directing himself as much as possible toward London.

"This time," said D'Artagnan, when they were sufficiently distant to proceed at a trot, "I think all is lost, and we have nothing better to do than to reach France. What do you think, Athos?"

"True," said Athos; "but we ought, I think, to see this great tragedy played out. Do not let us leave England before the crisis. Don't you agree with me, Aramis?"

"Entirely, my dear count. Then, too, I confess I should not be sorry to come across Mordaunt again. It appears to me that we have an account to settle with him, and that it is not our custom to leave a place without paying our debts, of this kind at least."

"Ah! that's another thing," said D'Artagnan; "and I should not mind waiting in London a whole year for a chance of meeting this Mordaunt in question. Only let us lodge with some one on whom we can count; for I imagine that, just now, Mr. Cromwell would not be inclined to trifle with us. Athos, do you know any inn in the whole town where one can find white sheets, roast beef reasonably cooked, and wine which is not made of hops or gin?"

"I think I know what you want," replied Athos. "De Winter took us to the house of a Spaniard, who, he said, had been naturalized in England by his new fellow-countrymen's guineas."

"Well, we must take every precaution."

"Yes, and among others, that of changing our clothes."

"Changing our clothes!" exclaimed Porthos. "I don't see why; we are very comfortable in those we have on."

"To prevent recognition," said D'Artagnan. "Our clothes have a cut which would denounce the Frenchman at first sight. Now, I don't care sufficiently about the cut of my jerkin to risk being hung at Tyburn, or sent for change of scene to the Indies. I shall buy a chestnut-colored suit. I've remarked that your Puritans revel in that color."

"But can you find your man?" said Aramis to Athos.

"Oh! to be sure, yes. He lives at the Bedford Tavern,

Green Hall street. Besides, I can find my way about the city with my eyes shut."

Athos was right. He went direct to the Bedford Tavern, and the host, who recognized him, was delighted to see him again with such worthy and numerous company.

Though it was scarcely daylight, our four travelers found the town in a great bustle, owing to the reported approach of Harrison and the king.

The plan of changing their clothes was unanimously adopted. The landlord sent out for every description of garments, as if he wanted to fit up his wardrobe. Athos chose a black coat, which gave him the appearance of a respectable citizen. Aramis, not wishing to part with his sword, selected a dark one of a military cut. Porthos was seduced by a red doublet with green pockets. D'Artagnan, who had fixed on his color beforehand, had only to select the shade, and looked in his chestnut suit exactly like a retired sugar-dealer.

"Now," said D'Artagnan, "for the actual man. We must cut off our hair, that the populace may not insult us. As we no longer wear the sword of the gentleman, we may as well have the head of the Puritan. This, as you know, is the important point of distinction between the Covenanter and the Cavalier.

"We look hideous," said Athos.

"And smack of the Puritan to a frightful extent," said Aramis.

"My head feels quite cold," said Porthos.

"And as for me, I feel anxious to preach a sermon," said D'Artagnan.

"Now," said Athos, "that we cannot even recognize one another, and have, therefore, no fear of others recognizing us, let us go and see the king's entrance."

They had not been long in the crowd before loud cries announced the king's arrival. A carriage had been sent to meet him; and the gigantic Porthos, who stood a head above all the other heads, soon announced that he saw the royal equipage approaching. D'Artagnan raised himself on tiptoe, and as the carriage passed, saw Harrison at one window and Mordaunt at the other.

The next day, Athos leaning out of his window, which looked upon the most populous part of the city, heard the Act of Parliament, which summoned the ex-king, Charles I., to the bar publicly cried.

"The parliament, indeed!" cried Athos. "Parliament can never have passed such an act as that."

At this moment the landlord came in.

"Did parliament pass this act?" Athos asked of him in English.

"Yes, my lord, the pure parliament."

"Come," said D'Artagnan, "as I don't understand English, suppose you speak to us in Spanish, which we all do understand."

"Do you mean to say, then," resumed Athos, "that there are two parliaments, one pure, and the other impure?"

"When I speak of the pure parliament," resumed the host, "I mean the one which Colonel Bridge has weeded."

"Ah! really," said D'Artagnan, "these people are very ingenious. When I go back to France I must suggest that to Cardinal Mazarin. One shall weed the parliament in the name of the court, and the other in the name of the people; so that there won't be any parliament left at all."

"And who is this Colonel Bridge?" asked Aramis.

"Colonel Bridge," replied the Spaniard, "is a retired wagoner, a man of much sense, who made one observation in driving his team, namely, that where there happened to be a stone on the road, it was much easier to remove the stone, than to try and make the wheel pass over it. Now, of two hundred and fifty-one members who compose the parliament, there were one hundred and ninety-one who were in his way, and might have upset his political wagon. He took them up, just as he formerly used to take up the stones from the road, and threw them out of the house."

"Neat," remarked D'Artagnan. "Very!"

"And all these one hundred and ninety-one were Stuartists?" asked Athos.

"Without doubt, señor; and, you understand, that they would have saved the king."

"To be sure," said Porthos majestically, "they were in the majority."

"And you think," said Aramis, "he will consent to appear before such a tribunal?"

"He will be forced to do so," answered the Spaniard.

"Now, Athos!" said D'Artagnan, "do you begin to believe that it's a ruined cause? and that what with your Harrisons, Joyces, Bridges, and Cromwells, we shall never get the upper hand?"

"But," said Aramis, "if they dare to condemn their king, it can only be to exile or imprisonment."

D'Artagnan whistled a little air of incredulity.

"We shall see," said Athos, "for we shall go to the sittings, I presume."

"You will not have long to wait," said the landlord; "they begin to-morrow."

"So, then, they drew up the indictment before the king was taken?"

"Of course," said D'Artagnan; "they began the day he was sold."

"And you know," said Aramis, "that it was our friend Mordaunt who made, if not the bargain, at least the first overtures."

"And you know," added D'Artagnan, "that whenever I catch him, I kill him, this Mr. Mordaunt."

"And I, too," exclaimed Porthos.

"And I, too," added Aramis.

"Touching unanimity!" cried D'Artagnan, "which well becomes good citizens like us. Let us take a turn round the town, and imbibe a little fog."

"Yes," said Porthos. "It will be a change from the beer."

CHAPTER LXI.

THE TRIAL.

THE next morning King Charles I. was brought by a strong guard before the high court which was to judge him. All London was crowding to the doors of the house. The throng was terrific; and it was not till after much pushing and some fighting that our four friends reached their destination. When they did so, they found the three lower rows of benches already occupied; but, as they were not anxious to be too conspicuous, all, with the exception of Porthos, who was anxious to display his red doublet, were quite satisfied with their places, the more so as chance had brought them to the center of their row, so that they were exactly opposite the armchair prepared for the royal prisoner.

Toward eleven o'clock the king entered the hall, surrounded by guards, but wearing his head covered, and with a calm expression turned to every side with a look of complete assurance, as if he were there to preside at an assembly of submissive subjects, rather than to reply to the accusations of a rebel court.

The judges, proud of having a monarch to humble, evidently prepared to employ the right they had arrogated to themselves, and sent an officer to inform the king that it was customary for the accused to uncover his head.

Charles, without replying a single word, turned his head in another direction, and pulled his felt hat over it. Then, when the officer was gone, he sat down in the armchair opposite the president, and struck his boot with a little cane which he carried in his hand. Parry, who accompanied him, stood behind him.

D'Artagnan was looking at Athos, whose face betrayed all those emotions which the king, possessing more power over himself, had chased from his own. This agitation, in one so cool and calm as Athos, frightened him.

"I hope," he whispered to him, "that you will follow his majesty's example, and not get killed for your folly in this den."

"Set your mind at rest," replied Athos.

"Aha!" continued D'Artagnan, "it is clear that they are afraid of something or other; for, look, the sentinels are being reinforced. They had only halberds before, and now they have muskets. The halberds were for the audience in the area. The muskets are for us."

"Thirty, forty, fifty, sixty-five men," said Porthos, counting the reinforcements.

"Ah!" said Aramis. "But you forget the officer."

D'Artagnan grew pale with rage. He had recognized Mordaunt, who, with bare sword, was marshaling the musketeers before the king, and opposite the benches.

"Do you think they have recognized us?" said D'Artagnan. "In that case I should beat a retreat. I don't care to be shot in a box."

"No," said Aramis, "he has not seen us. He sees no one but the king. '*Mon Dieu!*' how he stares at him, the insolent dog! Does he hate his majesty as much as he does us?"

"*Pardieu,*" answered Athos, "we only carried off his mother, and the king has spoiled him of his name and property."

"True," said Aramis; "but silence! the president is speaking to the king."

"Stuart," Bradshaw was saying, "listen to the roll-call of your judges, and address to the court any observations you may have to make."

The king turned his head away, as if these words had not been intended for him. Bradshaw waited, and, as there was no reply, there was a moment of silence.

Out of the hundred and sixty-three members designated, there were only seventy-three present, for the rest, fearful of taking part in such an act, had remained away.

When the name of Colonel Fairfax was called, one of those brief but solemn silences ensued, which announced the absence of the members who had no wish to take a personal part in the trial.

"Colonel Fairfax," repeated Bradshaw.

"Fairfax?" answered a laughing voice, the silvery tone of which betrayed it as that of a woman, "he is not such a fool as to be here."

A loud laugh followed these words, pronounced with that boldness which women draw from their own weakness—a weakness which removes them beyond the power of vengeance.

"It is a woman's voice," cried Aramis; "faith, I would give a good deal for her to be young and pretty." And he mounted on the bench to try and get a sight of her.

"By my soul," said Aramis, "she is charming. Look, D'Artagnan; everybody is looking at her; and in spite of Bradshaw's gaze, she has not turned pale."

"It is Lady Fairfax herself," said D'Artagnan, "don't you remember, Porthos, we saw her at General Cromwell's?"

The roll-call continued.

"These rascals will adjourn when they find that they are not in sufficient force," said the Count de la Fère.

"You don't know them, Athos; look at Mordaunt's smile. Is that the look of a man whose victim is likely to escape him. Ah, cursed basilisk, it will be a happy day for me when I can cross something more than a look with you."

"The king is really very handsome," said Porthos; "and look, too, though he is a prisoner, how carefully he is dressed. The feather in his hat is worth at least fifty pistoles. Look at it, Aramis."

The roll-call finished, the president ordered them to read the act of accusation. Athos turned pale. A second time he was disappointed in his expectation.

"I told you so, Athos," said D'Artagnan, shrugging his shoulders. "Now take your courage in both hands, and hear what this gentleman in black is going to say about his sovereignty, with full license and privilege."

Never till then had a more brutal accusation or meaner insults tarnished the kingly majesty.

Charles listened with marked attention, passing over the insults, noting the grievances, and, when hatred overflowed all bounds, and the accuser turned executioner beforehand, replying with a smile of contempt.

"The fact is," said D'Artagnan, "if men are punished for imprudence and triviality, this poor king deserves punish-

ment. But it seems to me that that which he is just now undergoing is hard enough."

At this moment the accuser concluded with these words:

"The present accusation is preferred by us in the name of the English people."

At these words there was a murmur along the benches, and a second voice, not that of a woman, but a man's, stout and furious, thundered behind D'Artagnan:

"You lie," it cried, "and nine-tenths of the English people shudder at what you say."

This voice was that of Athos, who, standing up with outstretched arm, and quite out of his mind, thus assailed the public accuser.

King, judges, spectators, all turned their eyes to the bench where the four friends were seated. Mordaunt did the same, and recognized the gentleman, around whom the three other Frenchmen were standing, pale and menacing. His eyes glittered with delight. He had discovered those to whose death he had devoted his life. A movement of fury called to his side some twenty of his musketeers, and, pointing to the bench where his enemies were—"Fire on that bench," he cried.

But, rapid as thought, D'Artagnan seized Athos by the middle of the body, and, followed by Porthos with Aramis, leaped down from the benches, rushed into the passages, and flying down the staircase, was lost in the crowd without, while the muskets within were pointed on some three thousand spectators, whose piteous cries and noisy alarms stopped the impulse already given to bloodshed.

Mordaunt, pale and trembling with anger, rushed from the hall, sword in hand, followed by six pikemen, pushing, inquiring, and panting in the crowd; and then, having found nothing, returned.

Quiet was at length restored.

"What have you to say in your defense?" asked Bradshaw of the king.

Then, rising with his head still covered, in the tone of a judge rather than a prisoner, Charles began:

"Before questioning me," he said, "reply to my question. I was free at Newcastle, and had there concluded a treaty with both houses. Instead of performing your part of this contract, as I performed mine, you bought me from the Scotch—not dear, I know, and that does honor to the economy of your government. But because you have paid the price of a slave, do you expect that I have ceased to be your king? No.

To answer you would be to forget it. I shall only reply to you when you have satisfied me of your right to question me. To answer you would be to acknowledge you as my judges, and I only acknowledge you as my executioners." And in the midst of a deathlike silence, Charles, calm, lofty, and with his head still covered, sat down again in his armchair.

"Why are not my Frenchmen here?" he murmured proudly, and turning his eyes to the benches where they had appeared for a moment; "they would have seen that their friend was worthy of their defense, while alive; and of their tears, when dead."

"Well," said the president—seeing that Charles was determined to remain silent—"so be it. We will judge you in spite of your silence. You are accused of treason, of abuse of power, and murder. The evidence will support it. Go, and another sitting will accomplish what you have refused to do in this."

Charles rose, and turned toward Parry, whom he found pallid, and with his temples covered with moisture.

"Well, my dear Parry," said he, "what is the matter? and what can affect you in this manner?"

"Oh, my king," said Parry, with tears in his eyes, and in a tone of supplication, "do not look to the left as we leave the hall."

"And why, Parry?"

"Do not look, I implore you, my king."

"But what is the matter? speak," said Charles, attempting to look across the hedge of guards which surrounded him.

"It is—but you will not look, will you? it is, because they have had the axe, with which criminals are executed, brought and placed there on a table. The sight is hideous."

"Fools," said Charles, "do they take me for a coward like themselves? You have done well to warn me. Thank you, Parry."

When the moment arrived, the king followed his guards out of the hall. As he passed the table on which the axe was laid, he stopped, and turning with a smile said:

"Ah! the axe, an ingenious device, and well worthy of those who know not what a gentleman is. You frighten me not, executioner's axe," added he, touching it with the cane which he held in his hand, "and I strike you now, waiting patiently and christianly for you to return the blow."

And, shrugging his shoulders with real contempt, he passed on. When he reached the door, a long stream of people, who had been disappointed in not being able to get into the house,

and to make amends had collected to see him come out, stood on each side as he passed, many among them glaring on him with threatening looks.

"How many people," thought he, "and not one true friend." And as he uttered these words of doubt and depression within his mind, a voice near him said:

"Respect to fallen majesty."

The king turned quickly round, with tears in his eyes and heart.

It was an old soldier of the guards, who could not see his king pass captive before him without rendering him this last homage. But the next moment the unfortunate man was nearly stunned with blows from the hilts of swords; and among those who set upon him the king recognized Captain Groslow.

"Alas!" said Charles, "that is a severe chastisement for a very slight fault."

He continued his way; but he had scarcely gone a hundred paces, when a furious fellow, leaning between two soldiers, spit in the king's face. Loud roars of laughter and sullen murmurs rose together. The crowd opened and closed again, undulating like a stormy sea; and the king imagined that he saw shining in the midst of this living wave the bright eyes of Athos.

Charles wiped his face, and said, with a sad smile, "Poor wretch, for half-a-crown he would do as much to his own father."

The king was not wrong. Athos and his friends, again mingling with the throng, were taking a last look at the martyr king.

When the cowardly insulter had spat in the face of the captive monarch, Athos had grasped his dagger. But D'Artagnan stopped his hand, and in a hoarse voice cried, "Wait!"

Athos stopped. D'Artagnan leaning on Athos, made a sign to Porthos and Aramis to keep near them, and then placed himself behind the man with the bare arms, who was still laughing at his own vile pleasantry, and receiving the congratulations of several others.

The man took his way toward the city. The four friends followed him. The man, who had the appearance of being a butcher, descended a little steep and isolated street, looking on to the river, with two of his friends. Arrived at the bank of the river, the three men perceived that they were followed, turned round, and looked insolently at the Frenchmen.

"Athos," said D'Artagnan, "will you interpret for me?"

At this, D'Artagnan walked straight up to the butcher, and touching him on the chest with the tip of his finger, said to Athos:

"Say this to him in English, 'You are a coward. You have insulted a defenseless man. You have befouled the face of your king. You must die.'"

Athos, pale as a ghost, repeated these words to the man, who, seeing the unpleasant preparations that were making, put himself in an attitude of defense. Aramis, at this movement, drew his sword.

"No," cried D'Artagnan, "no steel. Steel is for gentlemen."

And seizing the butcher by the throat:

"Porthos," said he, "knock this fellow down for me with a single blow."

Porthos raised his terrible arm, which whistled through the air like a sling, and the heavy mass fell with a dull noise on the skull of the coward, and broke it. The man fell like an ox under the mallet. His companions, horror-struck, could neither move nor cry out.

"Tell them this, Athos," resumed D'Artagnan; "'thus shall all die who forget that a fettered man wears a sacred head.'"

The two men looked at the body of their companion, swimming in black blood; and then, recovering voice and legs together, ran shouting away.

"Justice is done," said Porthos, wiping his forehead.

"And now," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "do not have any doubts about me; I undertake everything that concerns the king."

CHAPTER LXII.

WHITEHALL.

It was easy to foresee that the parliament would condemn Charles to death. Political judgments are generally merely vain formalities, for the same passions which give rise to the accusation give rise also to the condemnation. Such is the terrible logic of revolutions.

Meanwhile, before our four friends could mature their plans, they determined to put every possible obstacle in the way of the execution of the sentence. To this end they resolved to get rid of the London executioner; for though, of course, another could be sent for from the nearest town, there

would be still a delay of a day or two gained. D'Artagnan undertook this more than difficult task. The next thing was to warn Charles of the attempt about to be made to save him. Aramis undertook the perilous office. Bishop Juxon had received permission to visit Charles in his prison at Whitehall; Aramis resolved to persuade the bishop to let him enter with him. Lastly, Athos was to prepare, in every emergency, the means of leaving England.

The palace of Whitehall was guarded by three regiments of cavalry, and still more by the anxiety of Cromwell, who came and went, or sent his generals or his agents continually. Alone, in his usual room, lighted by two candles, the condemned monarch gazed sadly on the luxury of his past greatness, just as, at the last hour, one sees the image of life, milder and more brilliant than ever.

Parry had not quitted his master, and, since his condemnation, had not ceased to weep. Charles, leaning on a table, was gazing at a medallion of his wife and daughter; he was waiting first for Juxon, next for martyrdom.

"Alas!" he said to himself, "if I only had for a confessor one of those lights of the Church, whose soul has sounded all the mysteries of life, all the littleness of greatness, perhaps his voice would choke the voice that wails within my soul. But I shall have a priest of vulgar mind, whose career and fortune I have ruined by my misfortune. He will speak to me of God and of death, as he has spoken to many another dying man, not understanding that this one leaves his throne to a usurper and his children to starve."

And he raised the medallion to his lips.

It was a dull, foggy night. A neighboring church clock slowly struck the hour. The pale light of the two candles raised flickering phantoms in the lofty room. These phantoms were the ancestors of King Charles, standing out from their gilt frames. A profound melancholy had possessed itself of Charles. He buried his brow in his hands, and thought of all that was so dear to him, now to be left forever. He drew from his bosom the diamond cross which La Garretière had sent him by the hands of those generous Frenchmen, and kissed it, and remembered that she would not see it again till he was lying cold and mutilated in the tomb.

Suddenly the door opened, and an ecclesiastic, in episcopal robes, entered, followed by two guards, to whom the king waved an imperious gesture. The guards retired. The room resumed its obscurity.

"Juxon!" cried Charles, "Juxon, thank you, my last friend, you are come at a fitting moment."

The bishop looked anxiously at the man sobbing in the inglenook.

"Come, Parry," said the king, "cease your tears."

"If it's Parry," said the bishop, "I have nothing to fear; so allow me to salute your majesty, and to tell him who I am, and for what I am come."

At this sight, and this voice, Charles was about to cry out, when Aramis placed his finger on his lips, and bowed low to the king of England.

"The knight!" murmured Charles.

"Yes, sire," interrupted Aramis, raising his voice, "the Bishop Juxon, faithful knight of Christ, and obedient to your majesty's wishes."

Charles clasped his hands, amazed and stupefied to find that these foreigners, without other motive than that which their conscience imposed on them, thus combated the will of a people, and the destiny of a king.

"You!" he said, "you! how did you penetrate hither? If they recognize you, you are lost."

"Care not for me, sire; think only of yourself. You see, your friends are wakeful. I know not what we shall do yet, but four determined men can do much. Meanwhile, do not be surprised at anything that happens; prepare yourself for every emergency."

Charles shook his head.

"Do you know that I die to-morrow at ten o'clock?"

"Something, your majesty, will happen, between now and then, to make the execution impossible."

At this moment a strange noise, like the unloading of a cart, and followed by a cry of pain, was heard beneath the window.

"What is this noise and this cry?" said Aramis, perplexed.

"I know not who can have uttered that cry," said the king, "but the noise is easily understood. Do you know that I am to be beheaded outside this window? Well, this wood, that you hear fall, is the posts and planks to build my scaffold. Some workmen must have been hurt in unloading them."

Aramis shuddered, in spite of himself.

"You see," said the king, "that it is useless for you to resist. I am condemned; leave me to my death."

"My king," said Aramis, "they may well raise a scaffold, but they cannot make an executioner."

"What do you mean?" asked the king.

"I mean that, at this hour, the headsman is removed by force or persuasion. The scaffold will be ready by to-morrow,

but the headsman will be wanting, and they will put it off till the day after to-morrow."

"What then?" said the king.

"To-morrow night we shall rescue you."

"Oh! sir," cried Parry, "may you and yours be blessed!"

"I know nothing about it," continued Aramis, "but the cleverest, the bravest, the most devoted of us four, said to me, when I left him, 'Knight, tell the king, that to-morrow, at ten o'clock at night, we shall carry him off.' He has said it, and will do it."

"You are really wonderful men," said the king; "take my hand, knight, it is that of a friend who will love you to the last."

Aramis stooped to kiss the king's hand, but Charles clasped his and pressed it to his heart.

At this moment a man entered, without even knocking at the door. Aramis tried to withdraw his hand, but the king still held it. The man was one of those Puritans, half preacher and half soldier, who swarmed around Cromwell.

"What do you want, sir?" said the king.

"I desire to know if the confession of Charles Stuart is at an end?" said the stranger.

"And what is it to you?" replied the king; "we are not of the same religion."

"All men are brothers," said the Puritan. "One of my brothers is about to die, and I come to prepare him."

"Bear with him," whispered Aramis; "it is doubtless some spy."

"After my reverend Lord Bishop," said the king, to the man, "I shall hear you with pleasure, sir."

The man retired, but not before examining the supposed Juxon with an attention which did not escape the king.

"Knight," said the king, when the door was closed, "I believe you are right, and that this man only came here with evil intentions. Take care that no misfortune befalls you when you leave."

"I thank your majesty," said Aramis, "but, under these robes, I have a coat of mail and a dagger."

"Go, then, sir, and God keep you!"

The king accompanied him to the door, where Aramis pronounced his benediction upon him, and, passing through the anterooms, filled with soldiers, jumped into his carriage, and drove to the bishop's palace. Juxon was waiting for him impatiently.

Aramis resumed his own attire, and left Juxon with the assurance that he might again have recourse to him.

He had scarcely gone ten yards in the street, when he perceived that he was followed by a man wrapped in a large cloak. He placed his hand on his dagger and stopped. The man came straight toward him. It was Porthos.

"My dear friend," cried Aramis.

"You see, we had each our mission," said Porthos; "mine was to guard you, and I was doing so. Have you seen the king?"

"Yes, and all goes well."

"We are to meet our friends at the hotel at eleven."

It was then striking half-past ten by St. Paul's.

Arrived at the hotel, it was not long before Athos entered.

"All's well," he cried as he entered; "I have hired a little skiff, as narrow as a canoe, and as light as a swallow. It is waiting for us at Greenwich, opposite the Isle of Dogs, manned by a captain and four men, who, for the sum of fifty pounds sterling, will keep themselves at our disposition three successive nights. Once on board, we drop down the Thames, and, in two hours, are in the open sea. In case I am killed, the captain's name is Rogers, and the skiff is called the 'Lightning.' A handkerchief, tied at the four corners, is to be the signal."

Next moment D'Artagnan entered.

"Empty your pockets," said he, "I want a hundred pounds, and as for my own—" and he emptied them inside out.

The sum was collected in a minute. D'Artagnan ran out, and returned directly after.

"There," said he, "it's done. Ough! and not without a deal of trouble too."

"Has the executioner left London?" said Aramis.

"No, he is in the cellar."

"The cellar—what cellar?"

"Our landlord's, to be sure. Mousqueton is sitting on the door, and here's the key."

"Bravo!" said Aramis; "but how did you manage it?"

"Like everything else—with money; it cost me dear."

"How much?" asked Athos.

"Five hundred pounds."

"And where did you get all that from?" said Athos.

"The queen's famous diamond," answered D'Artagnan with a sigh.

"Ah! true," said Aramis, "I recognized it on your finger."

"You bought it back, then, from Monsieur Dessessarts?" asked Porthos.

"Yes, but it was fated that I should not keep it."

"Well, so much for the executioner," said Athos; "but unfortunately, every executioner has his assistant, his man, or whatever you call him."

"And this one had his," said D'Artagnan; "but, as good luck would have it, just as I thought I should have two affairs to manage, my friend was brought home with a broken leg. In the excess of his zeal, he had accompanied the cart containing the scaffolding as far as the king's window, and one of the planks fell on his leg and broke it."

"Ah!" cried Aramis, "that accounts for the cry that I heard."

"Probably," said D'Artagnan; "but as he is a thoughtful young man, he promised to send four expert workmen in his place to help those already at the scaffold, and wrote, the moment he was brought home, to Master Tom Lowe, an assistant carpenter and friend of his, to go down to Whitehall, with three of his friends. Here's the letter he sent by a messenger for sixpence, who sold it to me for a guinea."

"And what on earth are you going to do with it?" asked Athos.

"Can't you guess, my dear Athos? You, who speak English like John Bull himself, are Master Tom Lowe, we, your three companions. Do you understand now?"

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE WORKMEN.

TOWARD midnight Charles heard a great noise beneath his window. It arose from blows of the hammer and hatchet, clinking of pincers and crinching of saws.

Lying dressed upon his bed, this noise awoke him with a start, and found a gloomy echo in his heart. He could not endure it, and sent Parry to ask the sentinel to beg the workmen to strike more gently, and not disturb the last slumber of one who had been their king. The sentinel was unwilling to leave his post, but allowed Parry to pass.

Arriving at the window, Parry found an unfinished scaffold, over which they were nailing a covering of black serge. Raised to the height of twenty feet, so as to be on a level with the window, it had two lower stories. Parry, odious as was the sight to him, sought for those among some eight or ten workmen, who were making the most noise; and fixed on two men, who were loosening the last hooks of the iron balcony.

"My friends," said Parry, when he had mounted the scaffold and stood beside them, "would you work a little more quietly? The king wishes to get a sleep." One of the two, who was standing up, was of gigantic size, and was driving a pick with all his might into the wall, while the other kneeling beside him was collecting the pieces of stone. The face of the first was lost to Parry in the darkness, but as the second turned round and placed his finger on his lips, Parry started back in amazement.

"Very well, very well," said the workman aloud in excellent English. "Tell the king that if he sleeps badly to-night, he will sleep better to-morrow."

These blunt words, so terrible if taken literally, were received by the other workmen with a roar of laughter. But Parry withdrew, thinking he was dreaming.

"Sire," said he to the king, when he had returned, "do you know who these workmen are who are making so much noise?"

"I! no, how would you have me know?"

Parry bent his head and whispered the king, "It is the Count de la Fère and his friend."

"Raising my scaffold," cried the king, astonished.

"Yes, and at the same time making a hole in the wall."

The king clasped his hands, and raised his eyes to heaven; then, leaping down from his bed, he went to the window, and pulling aside the curtain, tried to distinguish the figures outside, but in vain.

Parry was not wrong. It was Athos whom he had recognized, and it was Porthos who was boring a hole through the wall.

This hole communicated with a kind of low loft—the space between the floor of the king's room and the ceiling of the one below it. Their plan was to pass through the hole they were making into this loft, and cut out from below a piece of the flooring of the king's room, so as to form a kind of trap-door.

Through this the king was to escape the next night, and, hidden by the black covering of the scaffold, was to change his dress for that of a workman, slip out with his deliverers, pass the sentinels, who would suspect nothing, and so reach the skiff that was waiting for him at Greenwich.

Day gilded the tops of the houses. The hole was finished, and Athos passed through it, carrying the clothes destined for the king, wrapped in a piece of black cloth, and the tools with which he was to open a communication with the king's room.

D'Artagnan returned to change his workman's clothes for his chestnut-colored suit, and Porthos to put on his red doublet. As for Aramis, he went off to the bishop's palace to see if he could possibly pass in with Juxon to the king's presence. All three agreed to meet at noon in Whitehall-place to see how things went on.

Aramis found his two friends engaged with a bottle of port and a cold chicken, and explained the arrangement to them.

"Bravo!" said Porthos, "besides, we shall be there at the time of the flight. What with D'Artagnan, Grimaud, and Mousqueton, we can manage to dispatch eight of them. I say nothing about Blaisois, for he is only fit to hold the horses. Two minutes a man makes four minutes. Mousqueton will lose another, that's five; and in five minutes they can have galloped a quarter of a league."

Aramis swallowed a hasty mouthful, drank off a glass of wine, and changed his clothes.

"Now," said he, "I'm off to the bishop's. Take care of the executioner, D'Artagnan."

"All right. Grimaud has relieved Mousqueton, and has his foot on the cellar-door."

"Well, don't be inactive."

"Inactive, my dear fellow! Ask Porthos. I pass my life upon my legs, like a ballet-dancer."

Aramis again presented himself at the bishop's. Juxon consented the more readily to take him with him, as he would require an assistant priest, in case the king should wish to communicate. Dressed as Aramis had been the night before, the bishop got into his carriage, and the former, more disguised by his pallor and sad countenance than his deacon's dress, got in by his side. The carriage stopped at the door of the palace.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning.

Nothing was changed. The anterooms were still full of soldiers, the passages still lined by guards. The king was already sanguine, but when he perceived Aramis his hope turned to joy.

"Sire," said Aramis, the moment they were alone, "you are saved, the London executioner has vanished. His assistant broke his leg last night, beneath your majesty's window—the cry we heard was his—and there is no executioner nearer at hand than Bristol."

"But the Comte de la Fère?" asked the king.

"Two feet below you; take the poker from the fireplace, and strike three times on the floor. He will answer you."

The king did so, and the moment after, three dull knocks, answering the given signal, sounded beneath the floor.

"So," said Charles, "he who knocks down there——"

"Is the Comte de la Fère, sire," said Aramis. "He is preparing a path for your majesty to escape by. Parry, for his part, will raise this slab of marble, and a passage will be opened."

"Oh! Juxon," said the king, seizing the bishop's two hands in his own, "promise that you will pray all your life for this gentleman, and for the other that you hear beneath your feet, and for two others again, who, wherever they may be, are vigilant, I am sure, for my safety."

"Sire," replied Juxon, "you shall be obeyed."

Meanwhile, the miner underneath was heard working away incessantly, when suddenly an unexpected noise resounded in the passage. Aramis seized the poker, and gave the signal to stop; the noise came nearer and nearer. It was that of a number of men steadily approaching. The four men stood motionless. All eyes were fixed on the door, which opened slowly, and with a kind of solemnity.

A parliamentary officer, clothed in black, and with a gravity that augured ill, entered, bowed to the king, and, unfolding a parchment, read him the arrest which is usually made to criminals before their execution.

"What is this?" said Aramis to Juxon.

Juxon replied with a sign which meant that he knew as little as Aramis about it.

"Then it is for to-day?" asked the king.

"Was not your majesty warned that it was to take place this morning?"

"Then I must die like a common criminal by the hand of the London executioner?"

"The London executioner has disappeared, your majesty, but a man has offered his services instead. The execution will therefore only be delayed long enough for you to arrange your spiritual and temporal affairs."

A slight moisture on his brow was the only trace of emotion that Charles evinced, as he learned these tidings. But Aramis was livid. His heart ceased beating, he closed his eyes, and leaned upon the table. Charles perceived it, and took his hand.

"Come, my friend," said he, "courage." Then he turned to the officer. "Sir, I am ready. I have little to delay you. Firstly, I wish to communicate; secondly, to embrace my children, and bid them farewell for the last time. Will this be permitted me?"

"Certainly," replied the officer, and left the room.

Aramis dug his nails into his flesh and groaned aloud.

"Oh, my Lord Bishop!" he cried, seizing Juxon's hands, "where is God? where is God?"

"My son," replied the bishop with firmness, "you see him not because the passions of the world conceal him."

"Be seated, Juxon," said the king, falling upon his knees. I have now to confess to you. Remain, sir," he added to Aramis, who had moved to leave the room. "Remain, Parry. I have nothing to say that cannot be said before all."

Juxon sat down, and the king, kneeling humbly before him, began his confession.

CHAPTER LXIV.

REMEMBER!

THE populace was already assembled when the confession terminated. The king's children then arrived—first, the Princess Elizabeth, a beautiful fair-haired child, with tears in her eyes, and then the Duke of Gloucester, a boy eight or nine years old, whose tearless eyes and curling lip revealed a growing pride. He had wept all night long, but would not show his grief to the people.

Charles' heart melted within him. He turned to brush away a tear, and then, summoning up all his firmness, drew his daughter toward him, recommending her to be pious and resigned. Then he took the boy upon his knee.

"My son," he said to him, "you saw a great number of people in the streets as you came here. These men are going to behead your father. Do not forget that. Perhaps some day they will want to make you king instead of the Prince of Wales, or the Duke of York, your elder brothers. But you are not the king, my son, and can never be so while they are alive. Swear to me, then, never to let them put the crown on your head. For one day—listen, my son—one day, if you do so, they will throw it all down, head and crown too, and then you will not be able to die calm and remorseless, as I die. Swear, my son."

The child stretched out his little hand toward that of his father, and said, "I swear to your majesty."

"Henry," said Charles, "call me your father."

"Father," replied the child, "I swear to you, that they shall kill me sooner than make me king."

"Good, my child. Now kiss me, and you too, Elizabeth—never forget me."

"Oh, never! never!" cried both the children, throwing their arms round their father's neck.

"Farewell," said Charles, "farewell, my children. Take them away, Juxon; their tears will deprive me of the courage to die."

Juxon led them away, and this time the doors were left open.

Meanwhile, Athos, in his concealment, waited in vain the signal to recommence his work. Two long hours he waited in terrible inaction. A deathlike silence reigned in the room above. At last he determined to discover the cause of this stillness. He crept from his hole, and stood, hidden by the black drapery, beneath the scaffold. Peeping out from the drapery, he could see the rows of halberdiers and muskeeters round the scaffold, and the first ranks of the populace, swaying and groaning like the sea.

"What is the matter, then?" he asked himself, trembling more than the cloth he was holding back. "The people are hurrying on, the soldiers under arms, and among the spectators I see D'Artagnan. What is he waiting for? What is he looking at? Good God! have they let the headsman escape?"

Suddenly the dull beating of muffled drums filled the square. The sound of heavy steps was heard above his head. The next moment the very planks of the scaffold creaked with the weight of an advancing procession, and the eager faces of the spectators confirmed what a last hope at the bottom of his heart had prevented him believing till then. At the same moment a well-known voice above him pronounced these words:

"Colonel, I wish to speak to the people."

Athos shuddered from head to foot. It was the king speaking on the scaffold. By his side stood a man wearing a mask, and carrying an axe in his hand, which he afterward laid upon the block.

The sight of the mask excited a great amount of curiosity in the people, the foremost of whom strained their eyes to discover who it could be. But they could discern nothing but a man of middle height, dressed in black, apparently of a certain age, for the end of a gray beard peeped out from the bottom of the mask which concealed his features.

The king's request had undoubtedly been acceded to by an affirmative sign, for in firm, sonorous accents, which vibrated

in the depths of Athos' heart, the king began his speech, explaining his conduct, and counseling them for the welfare of England.

He was interrupted by the noise of the axe grating on the block.

"Do not touch the axe," said the king, and resumed his speech.

At the end of his speech, the king looked tenderly round upon the people. Then, unfastening the diamond ornament which the queen had sent him, he placed it in the hands of the priest who accompanied Juxon. Then he drew from his breast a little cross set in diamonds, which, like the order, had been the gift of Henrietta Maria.

"Sir," said he to the priest, "I shall keep this cross in my hand till the last moment. You will take it from me when I am dead."

He then took his hat from his head, and threw it on the ground. One by one, he undid the buttons of his doublet, took it off, and deposited it by the side of his hat. Then, as it was cold, he asked for his gown, which was brought to him.

All the preparations were made with a frightful calmness. One would have thought the king was going to bed, and not to his coffin.

"Will these be in your way?" he said to the executioner, raising his long locks; "if so they can be tied up."

Charles accompanied these words with a look designed to penetrate the mask of the unknown headsman. His calm, noble gaze forced the man to turn away his head, and the king repeated his question.

"It will do," replied the man in a deep voice, "if you separate them across the neck."

"This block is very low; is there no other to be had?"

"It is the usual block," answered the man in the mask.

"Do you think you can behead me with a single blow?" asked the king.

"I hope so," was the reply. There was something so strange in these three words that everybody except the king shuddered.

"I do not wish to be taken by surprise," added the king. "I shall kneel down to pray, do not strike then."

"When shall I strike?"

"When I shall lay my head on the block, and say '*Remember!*'—then strike boldly."

"Gentlemen," said the king to those around him, "I leave you to brave the tempest, and go before you to a kingdom which knows no storms. Farewell."

Then he knelt down, made the sign of the cross, and lowering his face to the planks, as if he would have kissed them, said in a low tone, in French, "Comte de la Fère, are you there?"

"Yes, your majesty," he answered, trembling.

"Faithful friend, noble heart!" said the king, "I should not have been rescued. I have addressed my people, and I have spoken to God; last of all I speak to you. To maintain a cause which I believe sacred, I have lost the throne, and my children their inheritance. A million in gold remains: I buried it in the cellars of Newcastle Keep. You only know that this money exists. Make use of it, then, whenever you think it will be most useful, for my eldest son's welfare. And now, farewell."

"Farewell, saintly martyred majesty," lisped Athos, chilled with terror.

A moment's silence ensued, and then, in a full, sonorous voice, the king said, "*Remember!*"

He had scarcely uttered the word when a heavy blow shook the scaffold, and where Athos stood immovable a warm drop fell upon his brow. He reeled back with a shudder, and the same moment the drops became a black torrent.

Athos fell on his knees, and remained some moments, as if bewildered or stunned. At last he rose, and taking his handkerchief, steeped it in the blood of the martyred king. Then, as the crowd gradually dispersed, he leaped down, crept from behind the drapery, gliding between two horses, mingled with the crowd, and was the first to arrive at the inn.

Having gained his room, he raised his hand to his forehead, and finding his fingers covered with the king's blood, fell down insensible.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.

THE snow was falling thick and frozen. Aramis was the next to come in, and to discover Athos almost insensible. But at the first words he uttered, the count roused from the kind of lethargy in which he had sunk.

"Are you wounded?" cried Aramis.

"No, this is his blood."

"Where were you, then?"

"Where you left me, under the scaffold."

"Did you see it all?"

"No, but I heard all. God preserve me from another such hour as I have just passed."

"Here is the order he gave me, and the cross I took from his hand; he desired they should be returned to the queen."

"Then here's a handkerchief to wrap them in," replied Athos, drawing from his pocket the one he had steeped in the king's blood.

"And what," he continued, "has been done with the wretched body?"

"By order of Cromwell, royal honors will be accorded to it. The doctors are busied embalming the corpse, and when ready it will be placed in a lighted chapel."

"Mockery," muttered Athos savagely; "royal honors to one whom they have murdered!"

"Well, cheer up," said a loud voice from the staircase, which Porthos had just mounted. "We are all mortal, my poor friends."

"You are late, my dear Porthos."

"Yes, there were some people on the way who delayed me. The wretches were dancing. I took one of them by the throat, and think I throttled him a little. Just then a patrol rode up. Luckily the man I had had most to do with was some minutes before he could speak, so I took advantage of his silence to walk off."

"Have you seen D'Artagnan?"

"We got separated in the crowd, and I could not find him again."

"Oh!" said Athos satirically, "I saw him. He was in the front row of the crowd, admirably placed for seeing; and, as on the whole, the sight was curious, he probably wished to stay to the end."

"Ah! Count de la Fère," said a calm voice, though hoarse with running, "is it you who calumniate the absent?"

This reproof stung Athos to the heart, but as the impression produced by seeing D'Artagnan foremost in a coarse, ferocious crowd had been very strong, he contented himself with replying:

"I do not calumniate you, my friend. They were anxious about you here, and I told them where you were."

So saying, he stretched out his hand, but the other pretended not to see it, and he let it drop again slowly by his side.

"Ugh! I am tired," cried D'Artagnan, sitting down.

"Drink a glass of port," said Aramis; "it will refresh you."

"Yes, let us drink," said Athos, anxious to make it up by

hobnobbing glasses with D'Artagnan, "let us drink, and get away from this hateful country."

"You are in a hurry, sir count," said D'Artagnan.

"But what would you have us do here, now that the king is dead?"

"Go, sir count," replied D'Artagnan carelessly; "you see nothing to keep you a little longer in England? Well, for my part, I, a bloodthirsty ruffian, who can go and stand close to a scaffold, in order to have a better view of the king's execution—I remain."

Athos turned pale. Every reproach his friend made struck deeply into his heart.

"Hang it!" said Porthos, a little perplexed between the two, "I suppose, as I came with you, I must leave with you. I can't leave you alone in this abominable country."

"Thanks, my worthy friend. So then I have a little adventure to propose to you when the count is gone. I want to find out who was the man in the mask, who so obligingly offered to cut the king's throat."

"A man in a mask?" cried Athos. "You did not let the executioner escape, then?"

"The executioner is still in the cellar, where, I presume, he has had a few words' conversation with mine host's bottles. But you remind me. Mousqueton!"

"Sir," answered a voice from the depths of the earth.

"Let out your prisoner. All is over."

"But," said Athos, "who is the wretch who has dared to raise his hand against his king?"

"An amateur headsman," replied Aramis, "who, however, does not handle the axe amiss."

"Did you not see his face?" asked Athos.

"He wore a mask."

"But you, Aramis, who were close to him?"

"I could see nothing but a gray beard under the bottom of the mask."

"Then it must be a man of a certain age."

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "that matters little. "When one puts on a mask, it is not difficult to wear a beard under it."

"I am sorry I did not follow him," said Porthos.

"Well, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "that's the very thing which it came into my head to do."

Athos understood it all now.

"Forgive me, my friend," he said, offering his hand to D'Artagnan.

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "while I was looking on, the

fancy took me to discover who this masked individual might be. Well, I looked about for Porthos, and as I did so, I saw near me a head which had been broken, but which, for better or worse, had been mended with black silk. 'Humph!' thought I, 'that looks like my cut; I fancy I must have mended that skull somewhere or other.' And in fact, it was that unfortunate Scotchman, Parry's brother, you know, on whom Groslow amused himself by trying his strength. Well, this man was making signs to another at my left, and turning round, I recognized the honest Grimaud. 'Oh!' said I to him. Grimaud turned round with a jerk, recognized me, and pointed to the man in the mask. 'Eh?' said he, which meant, 'Do you see him?' '*Parbleu!*' I answered, and we perfectly understood one another. Well, everything finished you know how. The mob dispersed. I made a sign to Grimaud and the Scotchman, and we all three retired into a corner of the square. I saw the executioner return into the king's room, change his clothes, put on a black hat and a large cloak, and disappear. Five minutes later he came down the grand staircase."

"You followed him?" cried Athos.

"I should think so, but not without difficulty. Every minute he turned round, and thus obliged us to conceal ourselves. I might have gone up to him and killed him. But I am not selfish; and I thought it might console you all a little to have a share in the matter. So we followed him through the lowest streets in the city, and, in half an hour's time, he stopped before a small isolated house. Grimaud drew out a pistol. 'Eh?' said he, showing it. I held back his arm. The man in the mask stopped before a low door, and drew out a key; but before he placed it in the lock, he turned round to see if he was not followed. Grimaud and I had got behind a tree, and the Scotchman having nowhere to hide himself, threw himself on his face in the road. Next moment the door opened, and the man disappeared. I placed the Scotchman at the door by which he entered, making a sign to him to follow the man wherever he might go, if he came out again. Then going round the house, I placed Grimaud at the other exit, and here I am. Our game is beaten up. Now for the tally-ho!"

Athos threw himself into D'Artagnan's arms.

"Humph!" said Porthos. "Don't you think the executioner might be Master Cromwell himself, who, to make sure of his affair, undertook it himself?"

"Ah! just so. Cromwell is stout and short, and this man thin and lank, and rather tall than otherwise."

"Some condemned soldier, perhaps," suggested Athos, "whom they have pardoned at the price of this deed."

"No, no," continued D'Artagnan. "It was not the measured step of a foot-soldier, nor the easy gait of a horseman. If I am not mistaken, it was a gentleman's walk."

"A gentleman!" exclaimed Athos. "Impossible! It would be a disgrace to his whole family."

"Fine sport, by Jove!" cried Porthos, with a laugh that shook the windows. "Fine sport!"

"Swords!" cried Aramis, "swords! and let us not lose a moment."

The four friends resumed their own clothes, girt on their swords, ordered Mousqueton and Blaisois to pay the bill, and to arrange everything for immediate departure, and, wrapped in their large cloaks, left in search of their game.

The night was dark, the snow still falling, and the streets deserted. D'Artagnan led the way through the intricate windings and narrow alleys of the city, and ere long they had reached the house in question. For a moment D'Artagnan thought that Parry's brother had disappeared; but he was mistaken. The robust Scotchman, accustomed to the snows of his native hills, had stretched himself against a post, and like a fallen statue, insensible to the inclemencies of the weather, had allowed the snow to cover him. He rose, however, as they approached.

"Come," said Athos, "here's another good servant. Really, honest men are not so scarce as I thought."

"Don't be in a hurry to weave crowns for our Scotchman. I believe the fellow is here on his own account; for I have heard that these gentlemen born beyond the Tweed are very vindictive. I should not like to be Groslow, if he meets him."

"Well?" said Athos to the man in English.

"No one has come out," he replied.

"Then Porthos and Aramis, will you remain with this man, while we go round to Grimaud?"

Grimaud had made himself a kind of sentry-box out of a hollow willow, and as they drew near, he put his head out and gave a low whistle.

"Oh!" said Athos.

"Yes," replied Grimaud.

"Well, has anybody come out?"

"No, but somebody has gone in."

"A man or a woman?"

"A man." At the same time he pointed to a window, through the shutters of which a faint light streamed.

They returned round the house to fetch Porthos and Aramis.

"Have you seen anything?" they asked.

"No, but we are going to," replied D'Artagnan, pointing to Grimaud, who had already climbed some five or six feet from the ground.

All four came up together. Grimaud continued to climb like a cat, and succeeded at last in catching hold of a hook which served to keep one of the shutters back when opened. Then resting his foot on a small ledge, he made a sign to show that he was all right.

"Well?" asked D'Artagnan.

Grimaud showed his closed hands, with two fingers, spread out.

"Speak," said Athos; "we cannot see your signs. How many are they?"

"Two. One opposite to me, the other with his back to me."

"Good. And the man opposite to you is——"

"The man I saw go in."

"Do you know him?"

"I thought I recognized him, and was not mistaken. Short and stout."

"Who is it?" they all asked together in a low tone.

"General Oliver Cromwell."

The four friends looked at one another.

"And the other?" asked Athos.

"Thin and lank."

"The executioner," said D'Artagnan and Aramis at the same time.

"I can see nothing but his back," resumed Grimaud.

"But wait. He is moving; and if he has taken off his mask I shall be able to see. Ah!"

And, as if struck in the heart, he let go the hook, and dropped with a groan.

"Did you see him?" they all asked.

"Yes," said Grimaud, with his hair standing on end.

"The thin and spare man?"

"Yes."

"The executioner, in short?" asked Aramis.

"Yes."

"And who is it?" said Porthos.

"He—he—" murmured Grimaud, pale as death, and seizing his master's hand.

"Who? He?" asked Athos.

"Mordaunt!" replied Grimaud.

D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis uttered a cry of joy. Athos stepped back, and passed his hand over his brow. "Fatality!" he muttered.

CHAPTER LXVI.

CROMWELL'S HOUSE.

It was, in fact Mordaunt, whom D'Artagnan had followed without knowing it. On entering the house he had taken off his mask and the false beard, and mounting a staircase had opened a door, and in a room lighted by a single lamp found himself face to face with a man seated behind a desk.

This man was Cromwell.

Cromwell had two or three of these retreats in London, unknown except to the most intimate of his friends. Now Mordaunt was among these.

"It is you, Mordaunt," he said. "You are late."

"General, I wished to see the ceremony to the end, which delayed me."

"Ah! I scarcely thought you were so curious as that."

"I am always curious to see the downfall of your honor's enemies, and that one was not among the least of them. But you, general, were you not at Whitehall?"

"No," said Cromwell.

There was a moment's silence.

"Have you had any account of it?"

"None. I have been here since the morning. I only know that there was a conspiracy to rescue the king."

"Ah, you knew that," said Mordaunt.

"It matters little. Four men, disguised as workmen, were to get the king out of prison, and take him to Greenwich, where a skiff was waiting."

"And, knowing all that, your honor remained here, far from the city, calm and inactive?"

"Calm? yes," replied Cromwell. "But who told you I was inactive?"

"But—if the plot had succeeded?"

"I wished it to do so."

"I thought your excellence considered the death of Charles I. as a misfortune necessary to the welfare of England?"

"Yes, his death; but it would have been better not on the scaffold."

"Why so?" asked Mordaunt.

Cromwell smiled. "Because it could have been said that I had had him condemned for the sake of justice, and had let him escape out of pity."

"But if he had escaped?"

"Impossible; my precautions were taken."

"And does your honor know the four men who undertook to rescue him?"

"The four Frenchmen, of whom two were sent by the queen to her husband, and two by Mazarin to me."

"And do you think Mazarin commissioned them to act as they have done?"

"It is possible. But he will not avow it."

"How so?"

"Because they failed."

"Your honor gave me two of these Frenchmen when they were only fighting for Charles I. Now that they are guilty of a conspiracy against England, will your honor give me all four of them?"

"Take them," said Cromwell.

Mordaunt bowed with a smile of triumphant ferocity.

"Did the people shout at all?" Cromwell asked.

"Very little, except 'Long live Cromwell!'"

"Where were you placed?"

Mordaunt tried for a moment to read in the general's face if this was simply a useless question, or whether he knew everything. But his piercing eye could not penetrate the somber depths of Cromwell's.

"I was placed so as to hear and see everything," he answered.

It was now Cromwell's turn to look fixedly at Mordaunt, and Mordaunt's to make himself impenetrable.

"It appears," said Cromwell, "that this improvised executioner did his duty very well. The blow, so they told me at least, was struck with a master's hand."

Mordaunt remembered that Cromwell had told him he had had no detailed account, and he was now quite convinced that the general had been present at the execution, hidden behind some curtain or blind.

"Perhaps it was some one in the trade?" said Cromwell.

"Do you think so, sir? He did not look like an executioner."

"And who else than an executioner would have wished to fill that horrible office?"

"But," said Mordaunt, "it might have been some personal

enemy of the king, who may have made a vow of vengeance, and accomplished it in this manner."

"Possibly."

"And if that were the case, would your honor condemn his action?"

"It is not for me to judge. It rests between him and God."

"But if your honor knew this man?"

"I neither know, nor wish to know him. Provided Charles is dead, it is the axe, not the man, we must thank."

"And yet, without the man, the king would have been rescued."

Cromwell smiled.

"They would have carried him to Greenwich," he said, "and put him on board a skiff, with five barrels of powder in the hold. Once out at sea, you are too good a politician not to understand the rest, Mordaunt."

"Yes, they would all have been blown up."

"Just so. The explosion would have done what the axe had failed to do. They would have said that the king had escaped human justice, and been overtaken by God's arm. You see now why I did not care to know your gentleman in a mask."

Mordaunt bowed humbly. "Sir," he said, "you are a profound thinker, and your plan was sublime."

"Say absurd, since it is become useless. The only sublime ideas in politics are those which bear fruit. So, to-night, Mordaunt, go to Greenwich, and ask for the captain of the skiff 'Lightning.' Show him a white handkerchief knotted at the four corners, and tell the crew to disembark, and carry the powder back to the Arsenal, unless indeed——"

"Unless?"

"This skiff might be of use to you for your personal projects."

"Oh my lord, my lord!"

"That title," said Cromwell, laughing, "is all very well here, but take care a word like that does not escape in public."

"But your honor will soon be called so generally."

"I hope so, at least," said Cromwell, rising and putting on his cloak.

"Then," said Mordaunt, "your honor gives me full power?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you, thank you."

Cromwell turned as he was going.

"Are you armed?" he asked.

"I have my sword."

"And no one waiting for you outside?"

"No."

"Then you had better come with me."

"Thank you, sir, but the way by the subterranean passage would take me too much time, and I have none to lose."

Cromwell placed his hand on a hidden handle, and opened a door so well concealed by the tapestry, that the most practiced eye could not have discovered it, and which closed after him with a spring. This door communicated with a subterranean passage, leading under the street to a grotto in the garden of a house about a hundred yards from that of the future Protector.

It was just before this that Grimaud had perceived the two men seated together.

D'Artagnan was the first to recover from his surprise.

"Mordaunt," he cried, "thank heaven!"

"Yes," said Porthos, "let us knock the door in, and fall upon him."

"No," replied D'Artagnan, "no noise. Now, Grimaud, you come here, climb up to the window again, and tell us if Mordaunt is alone, and whether he is preparing to go out or to go to bed. If he comes out, we shall catch him. If he stays in, we will break in the window. It is easier and less noisy than the door."

Grimaud began to scale the wall again.

"Keep guard at the other door, Athos and Aramis. Porthos and I will stay here."

The friends obeyed.

"He is alone," said Grimaud

"We did not see his companion come out."

"He may have gone by the other door."

"What is he doing?"

"Putting on his cloak and gloves."

"He is ours," muttered D'Artagnan.

Porthos mechanically drew his dagger from the scabbard.

"Put it up again, my friend," said D'Artagnan. "We must proceed in an orderly manner."

"Hush!" said Grimaud, "he is coming out. He has put out the lamp. I can see nothing now."

"Get down then, get down."

Grimaud leaped down, and the snow deadened the noise of his fall.

"Now, go and tell Athos and Aramis to stand on each side of their door, and clap their hands if they catch him. We will do the same."

The next moment the door opened, and Mordaunt appeared on the threshold, face to face with D'Artagnan. Porthos clapped his hands, and the other two came running round. Mordaunt was livid, but he uttered no cry, nor called for assistance. D'Artagnan quietly pushed him in again, and by the light of a lamp on the staircase made him ascend the steps backward one by one, keeping his eyes all the time on Mordaunt's hands, who, however, knowing that it was useless, attempted no resistance. At last they stood face to face in the very room where ten minutes before Mordaunt had been talking to Cromwell.

Porthos came up behind, and unhooking the lamp on the staircase re-lit that in the room. Athos and Aramis entered last and locked the door after them.

"Oblige me by taking a seat," said D'Artagnan, pushing a chair toward Mordaunt, who sat down, pale but calm. Aramis, Porthos, and D'Artagnan drew their chairs near him. Athos alone kept away, and sat in the furthest corner of the room, as if determined to be merely a spectator of the proceedings. He seemed to be quite overcome. Porthos rubbed his hands in feverish impatience. Aramis bit his lips till the blood came.

D'Artagnan alone was calm, at least in appearance.

"Monsieur Mordaunt," he said, "since, after running after one another so long, chance has at last brought us together, let us have a little conversation, if you please."

CHAPTER LXVII.

CONVERSATIONAL.

THOUGH Mordaunt had been so completely taken by surprise, and had mounted the stairs under the impression of utter confusion, when once seated he recovered himself, as it were, and prepared to seize any possible opportunity of escaping. His eye wandered to a long stout sword on his flank, and he instinctively slipped it round within reach of his right hand.

D'Artagnan was waiting for a reply to his remark, and said nothing. Aramis muttered to himself, "We shall hear nothing but the usual commonplace things."

Porthos sucked his mustache, muttering, "A good deal of ceremony here about crushing an adder." Athos shrunk into his corner, pale and motionless as a bas-relief.

The silence, however, could not last forever. So D'Artagnan began:

"Sir," he said, with desperate politeness, "it seems to me that you change your costume almost as rapidly as I have seen the Italian mummers do, whom the Cardinal Mazarin brought over from Bergamo, and whom he doubtless took you to see, during your travels in France."

Mordaunt did not reply.

"Just now," D'Artagnan continued, "you were disguised—I mean to say, attired—as a murderer, and now——"

"And now I look very much like a man who is going to be murdered."

"Oh! sir," answered D'Artagnan, "how can you talk like that when you are in the company of gentlemen, and have such an excellent sword at your side."

"No sword is good enough to be of any use against four swords and four daggers."

"Well, that is scarcely the question. I had the honor of asking you why you altered your costume. Surely the mask and beard suited you very well, and as to the axe, I do not think it would be out of keeping even at this moment."

"Because, remembering the scene at Armentières, I thought I should find four axes for one, as I was to meet four executioners."

"Sir," replied D'Artagnan, in the calmest manner possible; "you are very young; I shall therefore overlook your frivolous remarks. What took place at Armentières has no connection whatever with the present occasion. We could scarcely have requested your mother to take a sword and fight with us."

"Aha! It's a duel then?" replied Mordaunt, as if disposed to reply at once to the provocation.

Porthos rose, always ready for this kind of adventure.

"Pardon me," said D'Artagnan. "Do not let us be in a hurry. We will arrange the matter rather better. Confess, Monsieur Mordaunt, that you are anxious to kill some of us."

"All," replied Mordaunt.

"Then, my dear sir, I am convinced that these gentlemen return your kind wishes, and will be delighted to kill you also. Of course they will do so as honorable gentlemen, and the best proof I can furnish is this——"

So saying, he threw his hat on the ground, pushed back his chair to the wall, and bowed to Mordaunt with true French grace.

"At your service, sir," he continued. "My sword is shorter

than yours, it's true, but bah! I hope the arm will make up for the sword."

"Halt!" cried Porthos, coming forward. "I begin, and that's logic."

"Allow me, Porthos," said Aramis.

Athos did not move. You might have taken him for a statue.

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "you shall have your turn. Monsieur Mordaunt dislikes you sufficiently not to refuse you afterward. You can see it in his eye. So pray keep your places, like Athos, whose calmness is most laudable. Besides, we will have no words about it. I have a particular business to settle with this gentleman, and I shall and will begin."

Porthos and Aramis drew back disappointed; and, drawing his sword, D'Artagnan turned to his adversary.

"Sir, I am waiting for you."

"And for my part, gentlemen, I admire you. You are disputing which shall fight me first, and you do not consult me, who am most concerned in the matter. I hate you all, but not equally. I claim the right to choose my opponent. If you refuse this right, you may kill me, for I shall not fight."

"It is but fair," said Porthos and Aramis, hoping he would choose one of them.

"Well, then," said Mordaunt, "I choose for my adversary the man who, not thinking himself worthy to be called Comte de la Fère, calls himself Athos."

Athos sprang up, but after an instant of motionless silence, he said, to the astonishment of his friends, "Monsieur Mordaunt, a duel between us is impossible. Give this honor to somebody else." And he sat down.

"Ah!" said Mordaunt with a sneer, "there's one who is afraid."

"Zounds!" cried D'Artagnan, bounding toward him, "who says that Athos is afraid?"

"Let him go on, D'Artagnan," said Athos, with a smile of sadness and contempt.

"Is it your decision, Athos?" resumed the Gascon.

"Yes, irrevocably."

"You hear, sir," said D'Artagnan, turning to Mordaunt, "choose one of us to replace the Comte de la Fère."

"As long as I don't fight with him, it is the same to me with whom I fight. Put your names into a hat, and draw lots."

"At least that will conciliate us all," said Aramis.

"I should never have thought of that," said Porthos, "and yet it's a very simple plan."

Aramis went to Cromwell's desk, and wrote the three names on slips of paper, which he threw into a hat.

Mordaunt drew one and threw it on the table.

"Ah! serpent," muttered D'Artagnan; "I would give my chance of a captaincy in the '*Mousquetaires*' for that to be my name."

Aramis opened the paper, and in a voice trembling with hate and vengeance, read, "D'Artagnan."

The Gascon uttered a cry of joy, and turning to Mordaunt:

"I hope, sir," said he, "you have no objection to make."

"None whatever," replied the other, drawing his sword and resting the point on his boot."

The moment that D'Artagnan saw that his wish was accomplished, and his man would not escape him, he recovered his usual tranquillity. He turned up his cuffs neatly, and rubbed the sole of his right boot on the floor, but did not fail, however, to remark that Mordaunt was looking about him in a singular manner.

"Are you ready, sir?" he said at last.

"I was waiting for you, sir," said Mordaunt, raising his head and casting at his opponent a look which it would be impossible to describe.

"Well, then," said the Gascon, "take care of yourself, for I am not a bad hand at the rapier."

"Nor I either."

"So much the better. That sets my mind at rest. Defend yourself."

"One minute," said the young man; "give me your word, gentlemen, that you will not attack me otherwise than one after the other."

"Is it to have the pleasure of insulting us that you say that, little serpent?"

"No, but to set my mind at rest, as you said just now."

"It is for something else than that, I imagine," muttered D'Artagnan, shaking his head doubtfully.

"On the honor of gentlemen," said Aramis and Porthos.

"In that case, gentlemen, have the kindness to retire into the corners, and leave us room. We shall want it."

"Yes, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "we must not leave this person the slightest pretext for behaving badly, which, with all due respect, I fancy he is anxious to do."

This new attack made no impression on Mordaunt. The space was cleared, the two lamps placed on Cromwell's desk, in order that the combatants might have as much light as possible; and the swords crossed.

D'Artagnan was too good a swordsman to trifle with his opponent. He made a rapid and brilliant feint, which Mordaunt parried.

"Aha!" he cried, with a smile of satisfaction.

And without losing a minute, thinking he saw an opening, he thrust right in, and forced Mordaunt to parry a counter-quart so fine that the point of the weapon might have turned within a wedding ring.

This time it was Mordaunt who smiled.

"Ah, sir," said D'Artagnan, "you have a wicked smile. It must have been the devil who taught it you, was it not?"

Mordaunt replied by trying his opponent's weapon with an amount of strength which the Gascon was astonished to find in a form apparently so weak; but, thanks to a parry no less clever than that which Mordaunt had just achieved, he succeeded in meeting his sword, which slid along his own without touching his chest.

Mordaunt rapidly sprang back a step.

"Ah, you lose ground, you are turning? Well, as you please. I even gain something by it, for I no longer see that wicked smile of yours. You have no idea what a false look you have, particularly when you are afraid. Look at my eyes, and you will see what your looking-glass never showed you—a frank and honorable countenance."

To this flow of words, not perhaps in the best taste, but characteristic of D'Artagnan, whose principal object was to divert his opponent's attention, Mordaunt did not reply, but, continuing to turn round, he succeeded in changing places with D'Artagnan.

He smiled more and more, and his smile began to make the Gascon anxious.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan, "we must finish with this," and in his turn he pressed Mordaunt hard, who continued to lose ground but evidently on purpose, and without letting his sword leave the line for a moment. However, as they were fighting in a room, and had not space to go on like that forever, Mordaunt's foot at last touched the wall, against which he rested his left hand.

"Ah, this time you cannot lose ground, my fine friend," exclaimed D'Artagnan. "Gentlemen, did you ever see a scorpion pinned to a wall? No. Well, then, you shall see it now."

In a second D'Artagnan had made three terrible thrusts at Mordaunt, all of which touched but only pricked him. The three friends looked on panting and astonished. At last

D'Artagnan, having got up too close, stepped back to prepare a fourth thrust, but the moment when, after a fine, quick feint, he was attacking as sharply as lightning, the wall seemed to give way, Mordaunt disappeared through the opening, and D'Artagnan's sword, caught between the panels, shivered like glass. D'Artagnan sprang back; the wall had closed again.

Mordaunt, in fact, while defending himself, had maneuvered so as to reach the secret door by which Cromwell had left, had felt for the handle with his left hand, turned it, and disappeared.

The Gascon uttered a furious imprecation, which was answered by a wild laugh on the other side of the iron panel.

"Help me, gentlemen," cried D'Artagnan, "we must break in this door."

"He escapes us," growled Porthos, pushing his huge shoulder against the hinges, but in vain. "'Sblood, he escapes us."

"So much the better," muttered Athos.

"I thought as much," said D'Artagnan, wasting his strength in useless efforts. "Zounds, I thought as much, when the wretch kept moving round the room. I thought he was up to something!"

"It's a misfortune which his friend, the devil, sends us," said Aramis.

"It's a piece of good fortune sent from heaven," said Athos, evidently pleased.

"Really!" said D'Artagnan, abandoning the attempt to burst open the panel after several ineffectual attempts, "Athos, I cannot imagine how you can talk to us in that way. You cannot understand the position we are in. In this kind of game, not to kill, is to let one's self be killed. This wretched fellow will be sending us a hundred Iron-sided beasts who will pick us off like berries in this place. Come, come, we must be off. If we stay here five minutes more, there's an end of us."

"Yes, you are right."

"But where shall we go to?" asked Porthos.

"To the hotel, to be sure, to get our baggage and horses; and from there, if it please God, to France, where, at least, I understand the architecture of the houses."

So, suiting the action to the word, D'Artagnan thrust the remains of his sword into its scabbard, picked up his hat, and ran down the stairs followed by the others.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE SKIFF "LIGHTNING."

MORDAUNT glided through the subterranean passage, and, gaining the neighboring house, stopped to take breath.

"Good," said he, "a mere nothing. Scratches, that is all. Now to my work."

He walked on at a quick pace, till he reached a neighboring cavalry-barrack, where he happened to be known. Here he borrowed a horse, the best in the stables, and in a quarter of an hour was at Greenwich.

"'Tis well," said he, as he reached the river bank. "I am half an hour before them. Now," he added, rising in the stirrup, and looking about him, "which, I wonder, is the 'Lightning?'"

At this moment, as if to reply to his words, a man lying on a heap of cables rose and advanced a few steps toward him. Mordaunt drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and tying a knot at each corner—the signal agreed upon—waved it in the air, and the man came up to him. He was wrapped in a large rough cape, which concealed his form and partly his face.

"Do you wish to go on the water, sir?" said the sailor.

"Yes, just so. Along the Isle of Dogs."

"And perhaps you have a preference for one boat more than another. You would like one that sails as rapidly——"

"As lightning," interrupted Mordaunt.

"Then mine is the boat you want, sir. I'm your man."

"I begin to think so, particularly if you have not forgotten a certain signal."

"Here it is, sir," and the sailor took from his coat a handkerchief, tied at each corner.

"Good; quite right!" cried Mordaunt, springing off his horse. "There is no time to lose; now take my horse to the nearest inn, and conduct me to your vessel."

"But," asked the sailor, "where are your companions? I thought there were four of you."

"Listen to me, sir; I'm not the man you take me for; you are in Captain Rogers' post, are you not? under orders from General Cromwell? Mine, also, are from him!"

"Indeed, sir, I recognize you; you are Captain Mordaunt."

"Don't be afraid, you are with a friend. I am Captain Groslow. The general remembered that I had formerly been

a naval officer, and he gave me the command of this expedition; has anything new occurred?"

"Nothing."

"I thought, perhaps, that the king's death——"

"It has only hastened their flight; in ten minutes they will, perhaps, be here. I am going to embark with you. I wish to aid in the deed of vengeance. All is ready, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"The cargo on board?"

"Yes—and we are sailing from Oporto to Antwerp, remember."

"'Tis well."

They then went down to the Thames. A boat was fastened to the shore by a chain fixed to a stake. Groslow jumped in, followed by Mordaunt, and in five minutes they were quite a way from that world of houses which then crowded the outskirts of London; and Mordaunt could discern the little vessel riding at anchor near the Isle of Dogs. When they reached the side of this felucca, Mordaunt, dexterous in his eager desire for vengeance, seized a rope, and climbed up the sides of the vessel with a coolness and agility very rare among landsmen. He went with Groslow to the captain's berth—a sort of temporary cabin of planks—for the chief apartment had been given up by Captain Rogers to the passengers, who were to be accommodated at the other extremity of the boat.

"They will have nothing to do with this side of the ship, then," said Mordaunt.

"Nothing at all."

"That's a capital arrangement. Return to Greenwich, and bring them here. I shall hide myself in your cabin. You have a long boat?"

"That in which we came."

"It appears light, and well-constructed."

"Quite a canoe."

"Fasten it to the poop with ropes—put the oars into it, so that it may follow in the track, and that there will be nothing to do except to cut the cord away. Put a good supply of rum and biscuit in it for the seamen; should the night happen to be stormy, they will not be sorry to find something to console themselves with."

"All shall be done. Do you wish to see the powder-room?"

"No; when you return, I will put the match myself; but be careful to conceal your face, so that you cannot be recognized by them."

"Never fear."

"There's ten o'clock striking at Greenwich."

Groslow, then, having given the sailor on duty an order to be on the watch with more than usual attention, went down into the long boat, and soon reached Greenwich. The wind was chilly, and the jetty was deserted as he approached it; but he had no sooner landed than he heard a noise of horses galloping upon the paved road.

These horsemen were our friends, or rather, an avant-garde, composed of D'Artagnan and Athos. As soon as they arrived at the spot where Groslow stood, they stopped, as if guessing that he was the man they wanted. Athos alighted, and calmly opened the handkerchief tied at each corner, and unfolded it; while D'Artagnan, ever cautious, remained on horseback, one hand upon his arms, leaning anxiously forward.

On seeing the appointed signal, Groslow, who had, at first, crept behind one of the cannon planted on that spot, walked straight up to the gentlemen. He was so well wrapped up in his cloak that it would have been impossible to have seen his face even if the night had not been so dark as to render any precaution superfluous; nevertheless, the keen glance of Athos perceived that it was not Rogers who stood before them.

"What do you want with us?" he asked of Groslow.

"I wish to inform you, my lord," replied Groslow, with an Irish accent, feigned of course, "that if you are looking for Captain Rogers you will not find him. He fell down this morning and broke his leg; but I'm his cousin; he told me everything, and desired me to look out for, and to conduct you, to any place named by the four gentlemen who should bring me a handkerchief tied at each corner, like that one which you hold, and one which I have in my pocket."

And he drew out the handkerchief.

"Was that all he said?" inquired Athos.

"No, my lord; he said you had engaged to pay seventy pounds if I landed you safe and sound at Boulogne, or any other port you choose, in France."

"What do you think of all this?" said Athos, in a low tone to D'Artagnan, after explaining to him in French what the sailor had said in English.

"It seems a likely story to me."

"And to me, too."

"Besides, we can but blow out his brains if he proves false," said the Gascon; "and you, Athos, you know something of everything, and can be our captain. I dare say you know how to navigate, should he fail us."

"My dear friend, you guess well; my father destined me for the navy, and I have some vague notions about navigation."

"You see!" cried D'Artagnan.

They then summoned their friends, who, with Blaisois, Mousqueton, and Grimaud, promptly joined them—leaving behind them Parry, who was to take their horses back to London; and they all proceeded instantly to the shore, and placed themselves in the boat, which, rowed by Groslow, began rapidly to clear the coast.

"At last," exclaimed Porthos, "we are afloat."

"Alas!" said Athos, "we depart alone."

"Yes; but all four together, and without a scratch; which is a consolation."

"We are not yet arrived at our destination," observed the prudent D'Artagnan; "beware of rencounters."

"Ah! my friend!" cried Porthos; "like the crows, you always bring bad omens. Who could intercept us in such a night as this—pitch dark—when one does not see more than twenty yards before one?"

"Yes—but to-morrow morning——"

"To-morrow we shall be at Boulogne; however, I like to hear Monsieur d'Artagnan confess that he's afraid."

"I not only confess it, but am proud of it," returned the Gascon; "I'm not such a rhinoceros as you are. Oho! what's that?"

"The 'Lightning,'" answered the captain, "our felucca."

"We are then arrived?" said Athos.

They went on board, and the captain instantly conducted them to the berth destined for them—a cabin which was to serve for all purposes, and for the whole party; he then tried to slip away under pretext of giving orders to some one.

"Stop a moment," cried D'Artagnan; "pray how many men have you on board, captain?"

"I don't understand," was the reply.

"Explain it, Athos."

Groslow, on the question being interpreted, answered:

"Three, without counting myself."

"Oh!" exclaimed D'Artagnan. "I begin to be more at my ease; however, while you settle yourselves, I shall make the round of the boat."

"As for me," said Porthos, "I will see to the supper."

"A very good deed, Porthos," said the Gascon. "Athos, lend me Grimaud, who in the society of his friend Parry, has, perhaps, picked up a little English, and can act as my interpreter."

"Go, Grimaud," said Athos.

D'Artagnan, finding a lantern on the deck, took it up,

and with a pistol in his hand, he said to the captain, in English, "Come" (being, with the usual English oath, the only English words he knew), and so saying, he descended to the lower deck.

This was divided into three compartments; one which was covered by the floor of that room in which Athos, Porthos, and Aramis were to pass the night; the second was to serve as the sleeping room for the servants; the third, under the prow of the ship, was underneath the temporary cabin in which Mordaunt was concealed.

"Oho!" cried D'Artagnan, as he went down the steps of the hatchway, preceded by the lantern; "what a number of barrels! one would think one was in the cave of Ali Baba. What is there in them?" he added, putting his lantern on one of the bins.

The captain seemed inclined to go upon deck again, but, controlling himself, he answered:

"Port wine."

"Ah! port wine! 'tis a comfort," said the Gascon, "that we shall not die of thirst; are they all full?"

Grimaud translated the question, and Groslow, who was wiping the perspiration from off his forehead, answered:

"Some full, others empty."

D'Artagnan struck the barrels with his hand, and having ascertained that he spoke the truth, pushed his lantern, greatly to the captain's alarm, into the interstices between the barrels, and finding that there was nothing concealed in them—

"Come along, he said; and he went toward the door of the second compartment.

"Stop!" said the Englishman. "I have the key of that door;" and he opened the door with a trembling hand, to the second compartment, where Mousqueton and Blaisois were just going to supper.

Here there was evidently nothing to seek, or to reprehend, and they passed rapidly to examine the third compartment.

This was the room appropriated to the sailors. Two or three hammocks hung up on the ceiling, a table and two benches composed all the furniture. D'Artagnan picked up two or three old sails, hung on the walls, and seeing nothing to suspect regained by the hatchway the deck of the vessel.

"And this room?" he asked, pointing to the captain's cabin.

"That's my room," replied Groslow.

"Open the door."

The captain obeyed. D'Artagnan stretched out his arm,

in which he held the lantern, put his head in at the half-opened door, and seeing that the cabin was nothing better than a shed—

“Good!” he said. “If there is an army on board, it is not here that it is hidden. Let us see what Porthos has found for supper.” And thanking the captain, he regained the state cabin, where his friends were.

Porthos had found nothing; and fatigue had prevailed over hunger. He had fallen asleep, and was in a profound slumber when D’Artagnan returned. Athos and Aramis were beginning to close their eyes, which they half opened when their companion came in again.

“Well?” said Aramis.

“All is well; we may sleep tranquilly.”

On this assurance the two friends fell asleep; and D’Artagnan, who was very weary, bade good-night to Grimaud, and laid himself down in his cloak, with a naked sword at his side, in such a manner that his body might barricade the passage, and that it should be impossible to enter the room without overturning him.

CHAPTER LXIX.

PORT WINE.

IN ten minutes the masters slept; but not so the servants—hungry and uncomfortable.

“Grimaud,” said Mousqueton to his companion, who had just come in after his round with D’Artagnan, “art thou thirsty?”

“As thirsty as a Scotchman!” was Grimaud’s laconic reply.

And he sat down and began to cast up the accounts of his party, whose money he managed.

“Oh law! lackadaisy! I’m beginning to feel queer!” cried Blaisois.

“If that’s the case,” said Mousqueton, with a learned air, “take some nourishment.”

“Do you call that nourishment” asked Blaisois, pointing to the barley bread and the pot of beer.

“Blaisois,” replied Mousqueton, “remember that bread is the true nourishment of a Frenchman, who is not always able to get bread: ask Grimaud.”

“Yes, but beer?” asked Blaisois sharply; “is that their true drink?”

“As to that,” answered Mousqueton, puzzled how to get

out of the difficulty, "I must confess, that to me, beer is as disagreeable as wine to the English."

"How? Monsieur Mousqueton! How—the English—do they dislike wine?"

"They hate it."

"But I have seen them drink it."

"As a punishment; for example, an English prince died one day because he was put into a butt of Malmsey. I heard the Chevalier d'Herblay say so."

"The fool!" cried Blaisois; "I wish I had been in his place."

"Thou canst be," said Grimaud, writing down his figures.

"How?" asked Blaisois; "I can? Explain yourself."

Grimaud went on with his sum, and cast up the whole.

"Port!" he said, extending his hand in the direction of the first compartment examined by D'Artagnan and himself.

"How—those barrels I saw through the door?"

"Port!" replied Grimaud, who began a fresh sum.

"I have heard," said Blaisois, "that port is a very good wine."

"Excellent!" cried Mousqueton, smacking his lips.

"Excellent!"

"Supposing these Englishmen would sell us a bottle," said the honest Blaisois.

"Sell!" cried Mousqueton, about whom there was a remnant of his ancient marauding character left. "One may well perceive, young man, that you are still inexperienced. Why buy when one can take?"

"To take?" answered Blaisois. "To covet one's neighbor's goods is forbidden, I believe."

"What a childish reason!" said Mousqueton, condescendingly; "yes, childish; I repeat the word. Where did you learn, pray, to consider the English as your neighbors?"

"The saying's true, dear Mouston; but I don't remember where."

"Childish—still more childish," replied Mousqueton. "Hadst thou been ten years engaged in war, as Grimaud and I have been, my dear Blaisois, you would know the difference that there is between the goods of others and the goods of your enemies. Now an Englishman is an enemy; as this port wine belongs to the English, therefore it belongs to us."

"And our masters?" asked Blaisois, stupefied by this harangue, delivered with an air of profound sagacity, "will they be of your opinion?"

Mousqueton smiled disdainfully.

"I suppose you think it necessary that I should disturb the repose of these illustrious lords to say, 'Gentlemen, your servant, Mousqueton, is thirsty.' What does Monsieur de Bracieux care, think you, whether I am thirsty or not?"

"'Tis a very expensive wine," said Blaisois, shaking his head.

"Were it gold, Monsieur Blaisois, our masters would not deny themselves this wine. Know that Monsieur de Bracieux is rich enough to drink a tun of port wine, even if obliged to pay a pistole for every drop." His manner became more and more lofty every instant: then he arose, and after finishing off the beer at one draught, he advanced majestically to the door of the compartment where the wine was. "Ah! locked!" he exclaimed; "these devils of English, how suspicious they are!"

"Shut!" cried Blaisois; "ah, the deuce it is; unlucky, for I feel the sickness coming on more and more."

"Shut!" repeated Mousqueton.

"But," Blaisois ventured to say, "I have heard you relate, Monsieur Mousqueton, that once on a time, at Chantilly, you fed your master and yourself with partridges which were snared, carps caught by a line, and wine drawn with a corkscrew."

"Perfectly true; but there was an air-hole in the cellar, and the wine was in bottles. I cannot throw the loop through this partition, nor move with a pack-thread a cask of wine which may, perhaps, weigh two hogsheads."

"No, but you can take out two or three boards of the partition," answered Blaisois, "and make a hole in the cask with a gimlet."

Mousqueton opened his great round eyes to the utmost, astonished to find in Blaisois qualities for which he did not give him credit.

"'Tis true," he said, "but where can I get a chisel to take the planks out—a gimlet to pierce the cask?"

"The trousers!" said Grimaud, still balancing his accounts.

"Ah, yes!" said Mousqueton.

Grimaud, in fact, was not only the accountant, but the armorer of the party; and as he was a man full of forethought these trousers, carefully rolled up in his valise, contained every sort of tool for immediate use.

Mousqueton, therefore, was soon provided with tools, and he began his task. In a few minutes he had got out three pieces of board. He tried to pass his body through the aperture; but, not being like the frog in the fable, who thought

he was larger than he really was, he found he must take out three or four more pieces of wood before he could get through.

He sighed, and began to work again.

Grimaud had now finished his accounts. He arose, and stood near Mousqueton.

"I—" he said

"What?" said Mousqueton.

"I can pass——"

"True—you—" answered Mousqueton, casting a glance at the long thin form of his friend; "you can pass, and easily—go in then."

"Rinse the glasses," said Grimaud.

"Now," said Mousqueton, addressing Blaisois, "now you will see how we old soldiers drink when we are thirsty."

"My cloak," said Grimaud, from the bottom of the cellar.

"What do you want?" asked Blaisois.

"My cloak—stop up the aperture with it."

"Why?" asked Blaisois.

"Simpleton!" exclaimed Mousqueton; "suppose any one came into the room."

"Ah, true!" cried Blaisois, with evident admiration; "but it will be dark in the cellar."

"Grimaud always sees, dark or light—night as well as day," answered Mousqueton.

"Silence!" cried Grimaud, "some one is coming."

In fact, the door of their cabin was opened. Two men, wrapped in their cloaks, appeared.

"Oh, ho!" said they, "not in bed at a quarter past eleven. That's against all rules. In a quarter of an hour let every one be in bed, and snoring."

These two men then went toward the compartment in which Grimaud was secreted; opened the door, entered, and shut it after them.

"Ah!" cried Blaisois; "he's lost!"

"Grimaud's a cunning fox," murmured Mousqueton.

They waited for ten minutes, during which time no noise was heard which might indicate that Grimaud was discovered; and at the expiration of that anxious interval the two men returned, closed the door after them, and repeating their orders that the servants should go to bed, and extinguish their lights, disappeared.

At that very moment Grimaud drew back the cloak which hid the aperture, and came in with his face livid, his eyes staring wide open with terror, so that the pupil was contracted almost to nothing, with a large circle of white around it. He

held in his hand a tankard full of some substance or another; and approaching the gleam of light shed by the lamp he uttered this single monosyllable—"Oh!" with such an expression of extreme terror that Mousqueton started, alarmed, and Blaisois was near fainting from fright.

Both, however, cast an inquisitive glance into the tankard—it was full of powder.

Convinced that the ship was full of powder instead of having a cargo of wine, Grimaud hastened to awake D'Artagnan, who had no sooner beheld him than he perceived that something extraordinary had taken place. Imposing silence, Grimaud put out the little night lamp, then knelt down, and poured into the lieutenant's ear a recital melodramatic enough not to require play of feature to give it force.

This was the pith of his story.

The first barrel that Grimaud had found on passing into the cellar, he struck—it was empty. He passed on to another—it was also empty; but the third which he tried was, from the dull sound that it gave out, evidently full. At this point Grimaud stopped, and was preparing to make a hole with his gimlet, when he found a spigot; he therefore placed his tankard under it, and turned the spout; something, whatever it was that the cask contained, fell into the tankard.

While he was thinking that he should first taste the liquor which the tankard contained, before taking it to his companions, the door of the cellar opened, and a man with a lantern in his hands, and enveloped in a cloak, came and stood just before the barrel, behind which Grimaud, on hearing him come in, instantly crept. This was Groslow. He was accompanied by another man who carried in his hand something long and flexible, rolled up, resembling a washing line.

"Have you the wick?" asked the one who carried the lantern.

"Here it is," answered the other.

At the voice of this last speaker, Grimaud started, and felt a shudder creeping through his very bones. He rose gently, so that his head was just above the round of the barrel; and, under the large hat, he recognized the pale face of Mordaunt.

"How long will this match burn?" asked this person.

"Nearly five minutes," replied the captain.

"Then tell the men to be in readiness—don't tell them why now; when the clock strikes a quarter after midnight collect your men. Get down into the long boat."

"That is, when I have lighted the match?"

"I shall undertake that. I wish to be sure of my revenge—are the oars in the

"Everything is ready."

"'Tis well."

Mordaunt knelt down and fastened one end of the train to the spigot, in order that he might have nothing to do but to set it on fire at the opposite end with the match.

He then arose.

"You heard me—at a quarter past midnight—in fact, in twenty minutes."

"I understand it all perfectly, sir," replied Groslow; "but allow me to say, there is great danger in what you undertake—would it not be better to entrust one of the men to set fire to the train?"

"My dear Groslow," answered Mordaunt, "you know the French proverb, 'Nothing that one does not do one's self is ever well done.' I shall abide by that rule."

Grimaud had heard all this—had seen the two mortal enemies of the musketeers—had seen Mordaunt lay the train: then he felt, and felt again, the contents of the tankard that he held in his hand; and, instead of the liquid expected by Blaisois and Mousqueton, he found beneath his fingers the grains of some coarse powder.

Mordaunt went away with the captain. At the door he stopped to listen.

"Do you hear how they sleep?" he said.

In fact, Porthos could be heard snoring through the partition.

"'Tis God who gives them into our hands," answered Groslow.

"This time the devil himself shall not save them," rejoined Mordaunt.

And they went out together.

CHAPTER LXX.

END OF THE PORT WINE MYSTERY.

D'ARTAGNAN, as one may suppose, listened to all these details with a growing interest. He awoke Aramis, Athos, and Porthos; and then, stretching out his arms, and closing them again, the Gascon collected in one small circle the three heads of his friends, so near as almost to touch each other.

He then told them under whose command the vessel was in which they were sailing that night; that they had Groslow for their captain, and Mordaunt acting under him as his lieu-

tenant. Something more deathlike than a shudder, at this moment, shook the brave musketeers. The name of Mor-daunt seemed to exercise over them a mysterious and fatal influence to bring terror even at the very sound.

"What is to be done?" asked Athos.

"You have some plan?"

D'Artagnan replied by going toward a very small, low window, just large enough to let a man through. He turned it gently on its hinges.

"There," he said, "is our road."

"The deuce—'tis very cold, my dear friend," said Aramis.

"Stay here, if you like, but I warn you, 'twill be rather too warm presently."

"But we cannot swim to the shore."

"The long boat is yonder, lashed to the felucca; we can take possession of it, and cut the cable. Come, my friends."

"A moment's delay," said Athos; "our servants?"

"Here we are," they cried.

Meantime the three friends were standing motionless before the awful sight which D'Artagnan, in raising the shutters, had disclosed to them through the narrow opening of the window.

Those who have once beheld such a spectacle know that there is nothing more solemn, more striking than the raging sea, rolling, with its deafening roar, its dark billows, beneath the pale light of a wintry moon.

"Gracious heaven! we are hesitating," cried D'Artagnan; "if we hesitate, what will the servants do?"

"I do not hesitate, you know," said Grimaud.

"Sir," interposed Blaisois, "I warn you that I cannot swim except in rivers."

"And I not at all," said Mousqueton.

But D'Artagnan had now slipped through the window.

"You have then decided, my friend?" said Athos.

"Yes," the Gascon answered; "Athos! you, who are a perfect being, bid the spirit to triumph over the body."

"Do you, Aramis, order the servants—Porthos, kill every one who stands in your way."

And, after pressing the hand of Athos, D'Artagnan chose a moment when the ship rolled backward, so that he had only to plunge into the water up to his waist.

Athos followed him before the felucca rose again on the waves; the cable which tied the boat to the vessel was then seen plainly rising out of the sea.

D'Artagnan swam to it, and held it, suspending himself by this rope, his head alone out of the water.

In one second Athos joined him.

They then saw, as the felucca turned, two other heads peeping—those of Aramis and Grimaud.

“I am uneasy about Blaisois,” said Athos; “he can, he says, only swim in rivers.”

“When people can swim at all they can swim everywhere. To the bark! to the bark!”

“But Porthos, I do not see him.”

“Porthos is coming—he swims like Leviathan.”

Porthos, in fact, did not appear. Mousqueton and Blaisois had been appalled by the sight of the black gulf below them, and had shrunk back.

“Come along! I shall strangle you both if you don’t get out,” said Porthos, at last seizing Mousqueton by the throat.

“Forward! Blaisois.”

A groan, stifled by the grasp of Porthos, was all the reply of poor Blaisois, for the giant, taking him neck and heels, plunged him into the water head foremost, pushing him out by the window as if he had been a plank.

“Now, Mouston,” he said, “I hope you don’t mean to desert your master?”

“Ah, sir,” replied Mousqueton, his eyes filling with tears, “why did you re-enter the army? We were so happy in the Château de Pierrefonds!”

And, without any other complaint, passive and obedient, either from true devotion to his master, or from the example set by Blaisois, Mousqueton went into the sea head foremost. A sublime action, at all events, for Mousqueton looked upon himself as dead. But Porthos was not a man to abandon an old servant; and when Mousqueton rose above the water, blinded, he found that he was supported by the large hand of Porthos, and that he could, without having occasion even to move, advance toward the cable with the dignity of a sea-god.

In a few minutes, Porthos had rejoined his companions, who were already in the canoe; but when, after they had all got in, it came to his turn, there was great danger that in putting his huge leg over the edge of the boat he would have upset the little vessel. Athos was the last to enter.

“Are you all here?” he asked

“Ah! have you your sword, Athos?” cried D’Artagnan.

“Yes.”

“Cut the cable, then.”

Athos drew a sharp poniard from his belt, and cut the cord. The felucca went on; the bark continued stationary, only moved by the wave

"Come, Athos!" said D'Artagnan, giving his hand to the count; "you are going to see something curious," added the Gascon.

CHAPTER LXXI.

FATALITY.

SCARCELY had D'Artagnan uttered these words than a ringing and sudden noise was heard resounding through the felucca, which now became dim in the obscurity of the night.

"That, you may be sure," said the Gascon, "means something."

They then, at the same instant, perceived a large lantern carried on a pole appear on the deck, defining the forms of shadows behind it.

Suddenly a terrible cry, a cry of despair, was wafted through the space, and, as if the shrieks of anguish had driven away the clouds, the veil which hid the moon was cleared away, and the gray sails and dark shrouds of the felucca were seen beneath the silvery night of the skies.

Shadows ran, as if bewildered, to and fro, on the vessel, and mournful cries accompanied these delirious walkers. In the midst of these screams they saw, standing on the top of the poop, Mordaunt, with a torch in his hand.

The figures, apparently excited with terror, were Groslow, who, at the hour fixed by Mordaunt, had collected his men and the sailors. Groslow, after having listened at the door of the cabin to hear if the musketeers were still asleep, had gone down into the cellar, convinced by their silence that they were all in a deep slumber. Then Mordaunt had opened the door, and run to the train—impetuous as a man who is excited by revenge and full of confidence—as are those whom God blinds—he had set fire to the sulphur!

All this while, Groslow and his men were assembled on deck.

"Haul up the cable, and draw the boat to us," said Groslow.

One of the sailors got down the side of the ship, seized the cable, and drew it—it came without any resistance.

"The cable is cut!" he cried, "no canoe!"

"How! no canoe!" exclaimed Groslow; "'tis impossible."

"'Tis true, however," answered the sailors; "there's nothing in the wake of the ship, besides, here's the end of the cable."

"What's the matter?" cried Mordaunt, who, coming up

out of the hatchway, rushed to the stern, his torch in his hand.

"Only that our enemies have escaped—they have cut the cord, and gone off with the canoe."

Mordaunt bounded with one step to the cabin and kicked open the door.

"Empty!" he exclaimed; "the demons!"

"We must pursue them," said Groslow; "they can't be gone far, and we shall sink them, passing over them."

"Yes, but the fire," ejaculated Mordaunt; "I have lighted it."

"A thousand devils!" cried Groslow, rushing to the hatchway; "perhaps there is still time to save us."

Mordaunt answered only by a terrible laugh, threw his torch into the sea, and then plunged himself into it. The instant that Groslow put his foot upon the steps of the hatchway the ship opened like the crater of a volcano—a burst of flame arose toward the skies with an explosion like that of a thousand cannon; the air burned, ignited by embers in flames—then the frightful lightning disappeared, the embers sank down, one after another, into the abyss, where they were extinguished; and, except a slight vibration in the air, after a few minutes had elapsed, one would have thought that nothing had happened.

Only—the felucca had disappeared from the surface of the sea—and Groslow and his three sailors were consumed.

The four friends saw all this—not a single detail of this fearful scene escaped them: at one moment, bathed as they were in a flood of brilliant light, which illumined the sea for the space of a league, they might each be seen—each in his own peculiar attitude and manner, expressing the awe, which, even in their hearts of bronze, they could not help feeling. Soon the torrent of flame fell all around them—then, at last the volcano was extinguished—all was dark—the floating bark and the heaving ocean.

They were all silent and dejected.

"By heaven!" at last said Athos, the first to speak, "by this time, I think, all must be over."

"Here! my lords! save me! help!" cried a voice, whose mournful accents reaching the four friends, seemed to proceed from some phantom of the ocean.

All looked around—Athos himself started.

"'Tis he! 'tis his voice!" he said.

All still remained silent—the eyes of all were still turned in the direction where the vessel had disappeared—endeavor-

ing in vain to penetrate the darkness. After a minute or two they were able to distinguish a man, who approached them, swimming vigorously.

Athos extended his arm toward him—"Yes, yes, I know him well," he said.

"He—again!" cried Porthos, who was breathing like a blacksmith's bellows, "why, he's made of iron."

"Oh, my God!" muttered Athos.

Aramis and D'Artagnan whispered to each other.

Mordaunt made several strokes more, and raising his arm in sign of distress above the waves—"Pity, pity on me! gentlemen—in heaven's name—I feel my strength failing me; I am dying."

The voice that implored aid was so piteous, that it awakened pity in the heart of Athos.

"Miserable wretch!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed!" said D'Artagnan, "people have only to complain to you. I believe he's swimming toward us. Does he think we are going to take him in? Row, Porthos, row." And setting the example, he plowed his oar into the sea—two strokes took the bark on twenty fathoms further.

"Ah! ah!" said Porthos to Mordaunt, "I think we have you here, my hero!"

"Oh! Porthos!" murmured the Comte de la Fère.

"Oh, pray! for mercy's sake don't fly from me. For pity's sake!" cried the young man, whose agonized breathing at times, when his head was under the wave, made the icy waters bubble.

D'Artagnan, however, who had consulted with Aramis, spoke to the poor wretch. "Go away," he said, "your repentance is too recent to inspire confidence. See! the vessel in which you wished to fry us is still smoking; and the situation in which you are is a bed of roses compared to that in which you wished to place us, and in which you have placed Monsieur Grosloz and his companions."

"Sir!" replied Mordaunt, in a tone of deep despair, "my penitence is sincere. Gentlemen, I am young, scarcely twenty-three years old. I was drawn on by a very natural resentment to avenge my mother. You would have done what I did."

Mordaunt wanted now only two or three fathoms to reach the boat—for the approach of death seemed to give him supernatural strength.

"Alas!" he said, "I am then to die! you are going to kill the son, as you killed the mother! Surely, if I am culpable, and if I ask for pardon. I ought to be forgiven."

Then—as if his strength failed him—he seemed unable to sustain himself above the water, and a wave passed over his head, which drowned his voice.

“Oh! that agonizes me!” cried Athos. Mordaunt reappeared.

“For my part,” said D’Artagnan, “I say, this must come to an end: a murderer as you were of your uncle; executioner as you were of King Charles! Incendiary! I recommend you to sink forthwith to the bottom of the sea; and if you come another fathom nearer, I’ll break your head with my oar.”

“D’Artagnan! D’Artagnan!” cried Athos, “my son! I entreat you: the wretch is dying; and it is horrible to let a man die without extending a hand to save him. I cannot resist doing so—he must live.”

“Zounds!” replied D’Artagnan, “why don’t you give yourself up directly, feet and hands bound, to that wretch? Ah! Comte de la Fère, you wish to perish by his hands? I, your son, as you call me; I will not!”

’Twas the first time that D’Artagnan had ever refused a request of Athos.

Aramis calmly drew his sword, which he had carried between his teeth as he swam.

“If he lays his hand on the boat’s edge, I will cut it off—regicide as he is.”

“And I,” said Porthos. “Wait.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Aramis.

“To throw myself in the water and strangle him.”

“Oh, gentlemen!” cried Athos; “be men! be Christians! See! death is depicted on his face! Ah! do not bring on me the horrors of remorse! Grant me this poor wretch’s life. I will bless you. I——”

“I am dying!” cried Mordaunt, “come to me! come to me!”

D’Artagnan began to be touched. The boat at this moment turned round, and the dying man was by that turn brought nearer to Athos.

“Monsieur the Comte de la Fère!” he cried; “I supplicate you! pity me! I call on you! where are you? I see you no longer—I am dying—help me! help me!”

“Here I am, sir!” said Athos, leaning, and stretching out his arm to Mordaunt with that air of dignity and nobleness of soul habitual to him; “here I am; take my hand, and jump into our boat.”

Mordaunt made a last effort—rose, seized the hand thus extended to him, and grasped it with the vehemence of despair.

"That's right," said Athos, "put your other hand here."

And he offered him his shoulders as another stay and support, so that his head almost touched that of Mordaunt; and these two mortal enemies were in as close an embrace as if they had been brothers.

"Now, sir," said the count, "you are safe—calm yourself!"

"Ah! my mother!" cried Mordaunt, with an eye of fire and a look of hatred impossible to describe, "I can only offer thee one victim, but it shall, at any rate, be the one whom thou wouldst have chosen!"

And while D'Artagnan uttered a cry, while Porthos raised the oar, and Aramis sought a place to strike, a frightful shake given to the boat precipitated Athos into the sea; while Mordaunt, with a shout of triumph, grasped the neck of his victim, and, in order to paralyze his movements, intertwined his legs with his—as a serpent might have done around some object. In an instant, without uttering an exclamation, without a cry for help, Athos tried to sustain himself on the surface of the waters; but the weight dragged him down: he disappeared by degrees; soon nothing was to be seen except his long floating hair; then everything disappeared, and the bubbling of the water, which, in its turn, was effaced, alone indicated the spot where these two men had sunk.

Mute with horror, the three friends had remained open-mouthed, their eyes dilated, their arms extended like statues, and motionless as they were, the beating of their hearts was audible. Porthos was the first who came to himself—he tore his hair.

"Oh!" he cried, "Athos! Athos! thou man of noble heart! Woe is me! I have let thee perish!"

At this instant, in the midst of a vast circle, illumined by the light of the moon, the same whirlpool which had been made by the sinking men was again obvious; and first were seen, rising above the waves, locks of hair—then a face, pale—with open eyes, yet nevertheless those of death; then a body which after having raised itself even to the waist above the sea, turned gently on its back according to the caprice of the waves, and floated.

In the bosom of this corpse was plunged a poniard, the gold hilt of which shone in the moonbeams.

"Mordaunt! Mordaunt!" cried the three friends; "'tis Mordaunt!"

"But Athos!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

Suddenly the boat leaned on one side, beneath a new and unexpected weight, and Grimaud uttered a shout of joy;

every one turned round, and beheld Athos, livid, his eyes dim, and his hands trembling, supporting himself on the edge of the boat. Eight vigorous arms bore him up immediately, and laid him in the bark, where directly Athos was warmed, reanimated, reviving with the caresses and cares of his friends, who were intoxicated with joy.

"You are not hurt?" asked D'Artagnan.

"No," replied Athos, "and he——"

"Oh, he! Now we may say, thank God! he is really dead. Look!" and D'Artagnan, obliging Athos to look in the direction that he pointed, showed him the body of Mordaunt floating on its back and which, sometimes submerged, sometimes rising, seemed still to pursue the four friends with a look full of insult and mortal hatred.

At last he sank. Athos had followed him with a glance in which the deepest melancholy and pity were expressed.

"Bravo, Athos!" cried Aramis, with an emotion very rare in him.

"A capital blow you gave!" cried Porthos.

"I have a son," said Athos, "I wished to live."

"In short," said D'Artagnan, "this has been the will of God."

"It is not I who killed him," added Athos, in a soft, low tone; "it is destiny."

CHAPTER LXXII.

HOW MOUSQUETON, AFTER BEING VERY NEARLY ROASTED,
HAD A NARROW ESCAPE OF BEING EATEN.

A DEEP silence reigned for a long time in the canoe after the fearful scene just described.

The moon, which had shone for a short time, disappeared behind the clouds: every object was again plunged in that obscurity so awful in deserts, and still more so in that liquid desert, the ocean, and nothing was heard, save the whistling of the west wind driving along the tops of the crested billows.

Porthos was the first to speak.

"I have seen," he said, "many things, but nothing that ever agitated me so much as what I have just witnessed. Nevertheless, even in my present state of perturbation, I protest I feel happy. I have a hundred pounds' weight less upon my chest. I breathe more freely." In fact, Porthos breathed so loud as to do credit to the powerful play of his lungs.

"For my part," observed Aramis, "I cannot say the same as you do, Porthos. I am still terrified to such a degree that I scarcely believe my eyes. I look around the canoe, expecting, every moment, to see that poor wretch holding in his hands the poniard which was plunged into his heart."

"Oh, I am quite easy," replied Porthos. "The sword was pointed at the sixth rib, and buried up to the hilt in his body. I do not reproach you, Athos, for what you have done; quite the contrary; when one aims a blow, that is the way to strike. So now, I breathe again, I am happy!"

"Don't be in haste to celebrate a victory, Porthos," interposed D'Artagnan; "never have we incurred a greater danger than we are now encountering. A man may subdue a man—he can't conquer an element. We are now on the sea, at night, without any pilot, in a frail bark; should a blast of wind upset the canoe, we are lost."

Mousqueton heaved a deep sigh.

"You are ungrateful, D'Artagnan," said Athos; "yes, ungrateful to Providence—to whom we owe our safety in a miraculous manner. Let us sail before the wind, and, unless it changes, we shall be drifted either to Calais or Boulogne. Should our bark be upset, we are five of us good swimmers, and able enough to turn it over again; or, if not, to hold on by it. Now we are on the very road which all the vessels between Dover and Calais take, 'tis impossible but that we should meet with a fisherman who will pick us up."

"But should we not find any fisherman, and should the wind shift to the north?"

"Then," said Athos, "it would be quite another thing; and we should never see land until we were on the other side of the Atlantic."

"Which implies that we may die of hunger," said Aramis.

"'Tis more than probable," answered the Comte de la Fère. Mousqueton sighed again, more deeply than before.

"What is the matter? what ails you?" asked Porthos.

"I am cold, sir," said Mousqueton.

"Impossible! your body is covered with a coating of fat, which preserves it from the cold air."

"Ah! sir, 'tis that very coating of fat which alarms me."

"How is that, Mousqueton?"

"Alas! your honor! in the library of the Château of Bracieux there's a number of books of travels."

"What then?"

"Among them the voyages of Jean Mocquet in the time of Henry IV."

"Well?"

"In these books, your honor, 'tis told how hungry voyagers, drifted out to sea, have a bad habit of eating each other, and beginning by——"

"By the fattest among them!" cried D'Artagnan, unable, in spite of the gravity of the occasion, to help laughing.

"Yes, sir," answered Mousqueton; "but permit me to say, I see nothing laughable in it. However," he added, turning to Porthos, "I should not regret dying, sir, were I sure that by doing so I might still be useful to you."

"Mouston," replied Porthos, much affected, "should we ever see my castle of Pierrefonds again, you shall have as your own, and for your descendants, the vineyard which surrounds the farm."

"And you shall call it—Mouston," added Aramis, "the vineyard of self-sacrifice, to transmit to latest ages the recollection of your devotion to your master."

One may readily conceive that during these jokes, which were intended chiefly to divert Athos from the scene which had just taken place, the servants, with the exception of Grimaud, were not silent. Suddenly Mousqueton uttered a cry of delight, in taking from beneath one of the benches a bottle of wine; and, on looking more closely still in the same place, he discovered a dozen of similar bottles, some bread, and a piece of salted beef.

"Oh, sir!" he cried, passing the bottle to Porthos, "we are saved—the bark is supplied with provisions."

This intelligence restored every one, save Athos, to gayety.

"Zounds!" exclaimed Porthos, "'tis astonishing how empty violent agitation makes the stomach."

And he drank off one bottle at a draught, and ate a good third of the bread and salted meat.

"Now," said Athos, "sleep, or try to sleep, my friends, I will watch."

In a few moments, notwithstanding their wet clothes, the icy blast that blew, and the previous scene, these hardy adventurers, with their iron frames, fitted for every hardship, threw themselves down, intending to profit by the advice of Athos, who sat at the helm, pensive and wakeful, guiding the little bark in the way it was to go, his eyes fixed on the heavens, as if he sought to discern, not only the road to France, but the benign aspect of protecting Providence. After some hours of repose, the sleepers were aroused by Athos.

Dawn had shed its light upon the blue ocean, and the dis-

tance of a musket's shot from them was seen a dark mass, above which was displayed a triangular sail; then masters and servants joined in a fervent cry to the crew of that vessel, to hear them, and to save.

"A bark!" all cried together.

It was, in fact, a small craft from Dunkirk, which was sailing toward Boulogne.

A quarter of an hour afterward, the boat of this craft took them on board the little vessel. Grimaud offered twenty guineas to the captain from his master, and, at nine o'clock in the morning, having a fair wind, our Frenchmen set foot on their native land.

"Egad! how strong one feels here!" said Porthos, almost burying his large feet in the sands. "Zounds! I could now defy a whole nation!"

"Be quiet, Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "we are observed."

"We are admired, i'faith," answered Porthos.

"These people who are looking at us are only merchants," said Athos, "and are looking more at the cargo than at us."

"I shall not trust to that," said the lieutenant, "and I shall make for the dunes* as soon as possible."

The party followed him, and soon disappeared with him behind the hillocks of sand unobserved. Here, after a short conference, they proposed to separate.

"And why separate?" asked Athos.

"Because," answered the Gascon, "we were sent by Cardinal Mazarin to fight for Cromwell; instead of fighting for Cromwell, we have served Charles I., not the same thing at all. In returning with the Comte de la Fère and Monsieur d'Herblay, our crime would be confirmed. We have escaped Cromwell, Mordaunt, and the sea, but we should not escape from Mazarin."

"You forget," replied Athos, "that we consider ourselves as your prisoners, and not free from the engagement we entered into."

"Truly, Athos," interrupted D'Artagnan, "I am vexed that such a man as you are should talk nonsense which schoolboys would be ashamed of. Chevalier," he continued, addressing Aramis, who, leaning proudly on his sword, seemed to agree with his companion, "Chevalier, Porthos and I run no risk; besides, should any ill-luck happen to two of us, will it not be much better that the other two should be spared to assist those who may be apprehended? Besides,

* Sandy hills about Dunkirk, from which it derives its name.

who knows whether, divided, we might not obtain a pardon—you from the queen, we from Mazarin—which, were we all four together, would never be granted. Come, Athos and Aramis, go to the right; Porthos, come with me to the left; these gentlemen should file off toward Normandy, we will, by the nearest road, reach Paris.”

He then gave his friends minute directions as to their route.

“Ah! my dear friend,” cried Athos, “how I should admire the resources of your mind, did I not stop to adore those of your heart.”

And he gave him his hand.

“Is the fox a genius, Athos?” asked the Gascon. “No! he knows how to crunch fowls, to dodge the huntsman, and to find his way home by day or by night, that’s all. Well, is all said?”

“All.”

“Then let’s count our money, and divide it. Ah! hurrah! there’s the sun! Good morrow, my friend, the sun! ’tis a long time since I saw you!”

“Come, come, D’Artagnan,” said Athos, “do not affect to be strong-minded: there are tears in your eyes; let us always be open to each other, and sincere.”

“What!” cried the Gascon, “do you think, Athos, we can take leave, calmly, of two friends, at a time not free from danger to you and Aramis.”

“No,” answered Athos; “embrace me, my son.”

“Zounds!” said Porthos, sobbing, “I believe I’m crying; but how foolish it is!”

They then embraced. At that moment their fraternal bond of union was closer than ever, and, when they parted, each to take the route agreed on, they turned back, to utter to each other affectionate expressions, which the echoes of the dunes repeated. At last they lost sight of each other; Porthos and D’Artagnan taking the road to Paris, followed by Mousqueton, who, after having been too cold all night, found himself, at the end of half an hour, far too warm.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE RETURN.

DURING the six months that Athos and Aramis had been absent from France, the Parisians, finding themselves, one morning, without either a queen or a king, were greatly annoyed at being thus deserted, and the absence of Mazarin, so

much desired, did not compensate for that of the two august fugitives.

The first feeling which pervaded Paris on hearing of the flight to Saint Germain, was that sort of affright which seizes children when they awake in the night, and find themselves alone. A deputation was therefore sent to the queen, to entreat her to return soon to Paris; but she not only declined to receive the deputies, but sent an intimation by Chancellor Sequier, implying that if the parliament did not humble itself before her majesty, by negativing all the questions that had been the cause of the quarrel, Paris would be besieged the next day.

This threatening answer, unluckily for the court, produced quite a different effect to that which was intended. It wounded the pride of the parliament, which, supported by the citizens, replied by declaring that Cardinal Mazarin was the cause of all the discontents; denounced him as the enemy both to the king and the State; and ordered him to retire from the court that very day, and from France within a week afterward; and enjoining, in case of disobedience on his part, all the subjects of the king to pursue and take him.

Mazarin being thus put out of the protection of the law, preparations on both sides were commenced: the queen, to attack Paris—the citizens, to defend it. The latter were occupied in breaking up the pavement, and stretching chains across the street, when, headed by the coadjutor, appeared the Prince de Conti (the brother of the Prince de Condé) and the Duc de Longueville, his brother-in-law. This unexpected band of auxiliaries arrived in Paris on the tenth of January; and the Prince of Conti was named, but not until after a stormy discussion, generalissimo of the army of the king, out of Paris.

As for the Duc de Beaufort, he arrived from Vendôme, according to the annals of the day, bringing with him his high bearing, and his long and beautiful hair, qualifications which ensured him the sovereignty of the market-places and their occupants.

It was just at this epoch that the four friends had landed at Dunkirk, and begun their route toward Paris. On reaching that capital, Athos and Aramis found it in arms. The sentinel at the gate refused even to let them pass, and called his sergeant.

The sergeant, with that air of importance which such people assume when they are clad with military dignity, said:

“Who are you, gentlemen?”

"Two gentlemen."

"And where do you come from?"

"From London."

"And what are you going to do in Paris?"

"We are going with a mission to her majesty the Queen of England."

"Where are your orders?"

"We have none: we left England, ignorant of the state of politics here, having left Paris before the departure of the king."

"Ah!" said the sergeant, with a cunning smile, "you are Mazarinists, who are sent as spies."

"My dear friend," here Athos spoke, "be assured, if we were Mazarinists, we should have all sorts of passports. In your situation, distrust those who are well provided with every formality."

"Enter into the guard-room," said the sergeant; "we will lay your case before the commandant of the post."

The guard-room was filled with citizens and common people, some playing, some drinking, some talking. In a corner, almost hidden from view, were three gentlemen, who had preceded Athos and Aramis, and an officer was examining their passports. The first impulse of these three gentlemen, and of those who last entered, was to cast an inquiring glance to each other. Those first arrived wore long cloaks, in the drapery of which they were carefully enveloped; one of them, shorter than the rest, remained pertinaciously in the background.

When the sergeant, on entering the room, announced that, in all probability, he was bringing in two Mazarinists, it appeared to be the unanimous opinion of the officers on guard that they ought not to pass.

"Be it so," said Athos; "yet it is probable, on the contrary, that we shall enter, because we seem to have to do with sensible people. There seems to be only one thing to do, which is, to send our names to her majesty the Queen of England, and, if she engages to answer for us, I presume we shall be allowed to enter."

On hearing these words, the shortest of the other three men seemed more attentive than ever to what was going on, and he wrapped his cloak around him more carefully than before.

"Merciful goodness!" whispered Aramis to Athos, "did you see?"

"What?" asked Athos.

"The face of the shortest of those three gentlemen?"

"No."

"He seemed to me—but 'tis impossible."

At this instant the sergeant, who had been for his orders, returned, and, pointing to the three gentlemen in cloaks, said:

"The passports are right; let these three gentlemen pass."

The three gentlemen bowed, and hastened to take advantage of this permission.

Aramis looked after them, and, as the least of them passed close to him, he pressed the hand of Athos.

"What is the matter with you, my friend?" asked the latter.

"I have—doubtless I am dreaming: tell me, sir," he said to the sergeant, "do you know those three gentlemen who are just gone out?"

"Only by their passports: they are three Frondists, who are gone to rejoin the Duc de Longueville."

"'Tis strange," said Aramis, almost involuntarily; "I fancied that I recognized Mazarin himself."

The sergeant burst out into a fit of laughter.

"He!" he cried; "he venture himself among us to be hung! Not so foolish as all that."

"Ah!" muttered Athos, "I may be mistaken; I haven't the unerring eye of D'Artagnan."

"Who is speaking of D'Artagnan?" asked an officer, who appeared at that moment upon the threshold of the room.

"What!" cried Aramis and Athos, "what! Planchet!"

"Planchet," added Grimaud, "Planchet, with a gorget, indeed!"

"Ah, gentlemen!" cried Planchet, "so you are back again in Paris. Oh, how happy you make us! no doubt you are come to join the princes!"

"As thou seest, Planchet," said Aramis, while Athos smiled at the importance now assumed by the old comrade of Mousqueton in his new rank in the city militia.

"Ah! so!" said Aramis; "allow me to congratulate you, Monsieur Planchet."

"Ah, the chevalier!" returned Planchet, bowing.

"Lieutenant?" asked Aramis.

"Lieutenant, with a promise of becoming a captain."

"'Tis capital: and pray how did you acquire all these honors?"

"In the first place, gentlemen, you know that I was the means of Monsieur de Rochefort's escape; well, I was very near being hung by Mazarin, and that made me more popular than ever."

"So, owing to your popularity——"

"No: thanks to something better. You know, gentlemen, that I served in Piedmont's regiment, and had the honor of being a sergeant?"

"Yes."

"Well, one day when no one could drill a mob of citizens, who began to march, some with the right foot, others with the left, I succeeded, I did, in making them all begin with the same foot, and I was made a lieutenant on the field."

"So, I presume," said Athos, "that you have a large number of the nobles with you?"

"Certainly. There are the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Longueville, the Duc de Beaufort, the Duc de Bouillon, the Maréchal de la Mothe, the Marquis de Sevigné, and I don't know who, for my part."

"And the Vicomte Raoul de Bragelonne?" inquired Athos, in a tremulous voice; "D'Artagnan told me that he had recommended him to your care, in parting."

"Yes, count; nor have I lost sight of him for an instant since."

"Then," said Athos, in a tone of delight, "he is well? no accident has happened to him?"

"None, sir."

"And he lives?"

"Still—at the hotel of the Great Charlemagne."

"And he passes his time?"

"Sometimes with the Queen of England—sometimes with Madame de Chevreuse. He and the Count de Guiche are never asunder."

"Thanks—Planchet—thanks," cried Athos, extending his hand to the lieutenant.

"Oh, sir!" Planchet only touched the tips of the count's fingers. "Oh, sir! and now, gentlemen, what do you intend to do?"

"To re-enter Paris, if you will let us, my good Planchet."

"Let you, sir? I am nothing but your servant!" Then, turning to his men:

"Allow these gentlemen to pass," he said; "they are friends of the Duc de Beaufort."

"Long live the Duc de Beaufort!" cried all the sentinels.

"Farewell till we meet again," said Aramis, as they took leave of Planchet; "if anything happens to us, we shall blame you for it."

"Sir," answered Planchet, "I am in all things yours to command."

"That fellow is no fool," said Aramis, as he got on his horse.

"How should he be?" replied Athos, while mounting also, "seeing that he has been so long used to brush his master's hats?"

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE AMBASSADORS.

THE two friends rode rapidly down the declivity of the Faubourg, but on arriving at the bottom were surprised to find that the streets of Paris had become rivers, and the open places lakes; after the great rains which fell in the month of January, the Seine had overflowed its banks, and the river had inundated half the capital. The two gentlemen were obliged, therefore, to get off their horses and take a boat, and in that manner they approached the Louvre.

Night had closed in, and Paris, seen thus, by the light of some lanterns, flickering on the pools of water, with boats laden with patrols with glittering arms, the watchword passing from post to post, Paris presented such an aspect as to seize strongly on the senses of Aramis—a man most susceptible of warlike impressions.

They reached the queen's apartments, and were instantly admitted to the presence of Henrietta Maria, who uttered a cry of joy on hearing of their arrival.

"Let them come in! let them come in!" exclaimed the poor queen.

"Let them come in!" reiterated the young princess, who had never left her mother's side, but essayed in vain to make her forget, by her filial affection, the absence of her two sons and her other daughter.

"Come in, gentlemen," repeated the princess, opening the door herself.

The queen was seated on a *fauteuil*, and before her were standing two or three gentlemen, and, among them, the Duc de Chatillon, the brother of the nobleman who was killed eight or nine years previously in a duel, on account of Madame de Longueville, on the Place Royale. All these gentlemen had been noticed by Athos and Aramis in the guard-house; and, when the two friends were announced, they started, and exchanged some words in a low tone.

"Well, sirs!" cried the queen, on perceiving the two friends; "you are come, faithful friends! but the royal couriers have

been more expeditious than you; and here are Monsieur de Flamareus and Monsieur de Chatillon, who bring me, from her majesty the Queen Anne, of Austria, the most recent intelligence."

Aramis and Athos were astonished by the calmness, even the gayety, of the queen's manner.

"Go on with your recital, sirs," said the queen, turning to the Duc de Chatillon. "You said that his majesty King Charles, my august consort, had been condemned to death by a majority of his subjects!"

"Yes, madame," Chatillon stammered out.

Athos and Aramis seemed more and more astonished.

"And that, being conducted to the scaffold," resumed the queen, "—oh, my God! oh, my king!—and that, being led to the scaffold, he had been saved by an indignant people?"

"Just so, madame," replied Chatillon, in so low a voice that, though the two friends were listening eagerly, they could hardly hear this affirmation.

The queen clapped her hands in enthusiastic gratitude, while her daughter threw her arms round her mother's neck, and kissed her, her own eyes streaming with tears.

"Now, madame, nothing remains to me except to proffer my respectful homage," said Chatillon, who felt confused and ashamed beneath the stern gaze of Athos.

"One moment, yes," answered the queen. "One moment, I beg, for here are the Chevalier d'Herblay and the Comte de la Fère—just arrived from London—and they can give you, as eyewitnesses, such details as you can convey to the queen, my royal sister. Speak, gentlemen, speak—I am listening—conceal nothing—gloss over nothing. Since his majesty still lives—since the honor of the throne is in safety, everything else is a matter of indifference to me."

Athos turned pale, and laid his hand on his heart.

"Well!" exclaimed the queen, who remarked this movement and this paleness. "Speak, sir! I beg you to do so."

"I beg you to excuse me, madame—I wish to add nothing to the recital of these gentlemen until they perceive themselves that they have, perhaps, been mistaken."

"Mistaken!" cried the queen, almost suffocated by emotion; "mistaken! What has happened, then?"

"Sir," interposed Monsieur de Flamareus to Athos, "if we are mistaken, the error has originated with the queen. I do not suppose you will have the presumption to set it to rights—that would be to accuse her majesty, Queen Anne, of falsehood."

Athos sighed deeply.

"Or rather, sir," said Aramis, with his irritating politeness, "the error of that person who was with you when we met you in the guard-room, for if the Comte de la Fère and I are not mistaken, when we saw you there you had with you a third gentleman."

Chatillon and Flamareus started.

"Explain yourself, count!" cried the queen, whose anguish became greater every moment. "On your brow I read despair—your lips falter, ere you announce some terrible tidings—your hands tremble. Oh, my God! my God! what has happened!"

"Lord!" ejaculated the young princess, falling on her knees, "have mercy on us."

A short altercation ensued in a low tone between the Duc de Chatillon and Aramis, during which Athos, his hands on his heart, his head bent low, approached the queen, and in a voice of deep sorrow, said:

"Madame! princes—who by nature are above other men—receive from heaven courage to support greater misfortunes than those of lower rank, for their hearts are elevated as their fortunes. We ought not, therefore, I think, to act toward a queen so illustrious as your majesty, as we should do toward a woman of our lowlier condition. Queen—destined as you are to endure every sorrow on this earth, hear the result of our mission."

Athos, kneeling down before the queen, trembling and very cold, drew from his bosom, inclosed in the same case, the order set in diamonds, which the queen had given to Lord de Winter and the wedding-ring which Charles I. before his death had placed in the hands of Aramis. Since the moment that he had first received these two things, Athos had never parted with them.

He opened the case, and offered them to the queen, with silent and deep anguish.

The queen stretched out her hand—seized the ring—pressed it convulsively to her lips—and without being able to breathe a sigh, to give vent to a sob, she extended her arms, became deadly pale, and fell senseless in the arms of her attendants and her daughter.

Athos kissed the hem of the robe of the widowed queen, and rising, with a dignity that made a deep impression on those around:

"I, the Comte de la Fère, a gentleman who has never deceived any human being, swear before God, and before this

unhappy queen, that all that was possible to save the king of England was done while we were on English ground. Now, chevalier," he added, turning to Aramis, "let us go. Our duty is fulfilled."

"Not yet," said Aramis. "We have still a word to say to these gentlemen."

And turning to Chatillon, he said—"Sir, be so good as not to go away without hearing something that I cannot say before the queen."

Chatillon bowed in token of assent and they all went out, stopping at the window of a gallery on the ground floor.

"Sir!" said Aramis, "you allowed yourself just now to treat us in a most extraordinary manner."

"Sir!" cried De Chatillon.

"What have you done with Monsieur de Bruy? Has he, perchance, gone to change his face, which was too like that of Monsieur de Mazarin? There are abundance of Italian masks at the Palais Royal: from harlequin even to pantaloen."

"Chevalier! chevalier!" said Athos.

"Leave me alone," replied Aramis impatiently. "I don't like things that stop half way."

"Finish then, sir," answered De Chatillon, with as much hauteur as Aramis.

"Gentlemen," resumed Aramis, "any one but the Comte de la Fère and myself would have had you arrested—for we have friends in Paris—but we are contented with another course. Come and talk with us for five minutes—sword in hand—upon this deserted terrace."

"Willingly," replied De Chatillon.

"Duke," said Flamareus, "you forget that to-morrow you are to command an expedition of the greatest importance, projected by the prince, assented to by the queen. Until to-morrow evening you are not at your own disposal."

"Let it be, then, the day after to-morrow," said Aramis.

"To-morrow, rather," said De Chatillon, "and if you will take the trouble of coming so far as the gates of Charenton."

"Well, then, to-morrow. Pray, are you going to rejoin your cardinal? Swear first, on your honor, not to inform him of our return."

De Chatillon looked at him. There was so much of irony in his speech, that the duke had great difficulty in bridling his anger; but, at a word from Flamareus, he restrained himself, and contented himself with saying:

"You promise me, sir—that's agreed—that I shall find you to-morrow at Charenton?"

"Oh, sir, don't be afraid!" replied Aramis; and the two gentlemen shortly afterward left the Louvre.

"For what reason is all this fume and fury?" asked Athos.

"What have they done to you?"

"They did—did you not see them?"

"No."

"They laughed when we swore that we had done our duty in England. Now, if they believed us, they laughed in order to insult us; if they did not believe it, they insulted us still more. However, I'm glad not to fight them until to-morrow. I hope to have something better to do to-night than to draw my sword."

"What have you to do?"

"Egad! to take Mazarin."

Athos curled his lip with disdain.

"These undertakings do not suit me, as you know, Aramis."

"Why?"

"Because they are taking people unawares."

"Really, Athos, you would make a singular general. You would fight only by broad daylight. Warn your foe before an attack; and never attempt anything by night, lest you should be accused of taking advantage of the darkness."

Athos smiled.

"Say, at once, you disapprove of my proposal."

"I think you ought to do nothing, since you exacted a promise from these gentlemen not to let Mazarin know that we were in France."

"I have entered into no engagement, and consider myself quite free. Come, come."

"Where?"

"Either to seek the Duc de Beaufort, or the Duc de Bouillon, and to tell them about this."

"Yes, but on one condition—that we begin by the coadjutor. He is a priest, learned in cases of conscience, and we will tell him ours."

It was then agreed that they were to go first to Monsieur de Bouillon, as his house came first; but first of all Athos begged that he might go to the Hotel du Grand Charlemagne, to see Raoul.

They re-entered the boat which had brought them to the Louvre, and went thence to the Halles; and finding there Grimaud and Blaisois, they proceeded to the Rue Guénégaud.

But Raoul was not at the Hotel du Grand Charlemagne. He had received a message from the prince, to whom he had hastened with Olivain the instant he had received it.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE THREE LIEUTENANTS OF THE GENERALISSIMO.

THE night was dark; and the town still resounded with all those noises which disclose a city in a state of siege. Athos and Aramis did not proceed a hundred steps without being stopped by sentinels placed before the barricades, who asked them the word; and on their saying that they were going to Monsieur de Bouillon on a mission of importance, a guide was given them under pretext of conducting them, but, in fact, as a watch over their movements.

On arriving at the Hotel de Bouillon, they came across a little troop of three cavaliers, who seemed to know every possible watchword; for they walked without either guide or escort, and on arriving at the barricades had nothing to do but to speak to those who guarded them, and who let them pass with all the deference due probably to their birth.

On seeing them, Athos and Aramis stood still.

"Oh!" cried Aramis, "do you see, count?"

"Yes," said Athos.

"Who do these three cavaliers appear to you to be? These are our men."

"You are not mistaken; I recognize Monsieur de Flamarens."

"And Monsieur de Chatillon."

"As to the cavalier in the brown cloak——"

"It is the cardinal."

"How the devil do they venture so near the Hotel de Bouillon?"

Athos smiled, but did not reply. Five minutes afterward they knocked at the prince's door.

This door was guarded by a sentinel, and there was also a guard placed in the courtyard, ready to obey the orders of the lieutenant of the Prince de Conti.

Monsieur de Bouillon had the gout, and was in bed; but notwithstanding his illness, which had prevented his mounting on horseback for the last month—that is, since Paris had been besieged—he was ready to receive the Comte de la Fère and the Chevalier d'Herblay.

He was in bed, but surrounded with all the paraphernalia of war. Everywhere were swords, pistols, cuirasses, and arquebuses, and it was plain that as soon as his gout was cured Monsieur de Bouillon would give a pretty skein of silk to the enemies of the parliament to unravel. Meanwhile, to his great regret, as he said, he was obliged to keep his bed.

"Ah! gentlemen," he cried, as the two friends entered, "you are very happy! you can ride. Come, go fight for the cause of the people. But I, as you see, am nailed to my bed—ah! this demon, the gout—this demon, the gout!"

"My lord," said Athos, "we are just arrived from England, and our first concern is to inquire after your health."

"Thanks, gentlemen! thanks! As you see, my health is bad, but you come from England. And King Charles is well, as I have just heard?"

"He is dead! my lord," said Aramis.

"Pooh!" said the duke, astonished.

"Dead on the scaffold; condemned by the parliament."

"Impossible!"

"And executed in our presence."

"What then has Monsieur de Flamareus been saying to me?"

"Monsieur de Flamareus?"

"Yes, he has just gone out. Deuce take it! this gout!" said the duke.

"My lord," said Athos, "we admire your devotion to the cause you have espoused, in remaining at the head of the army while so ill, in so much pain."

"One must," replied Monsieur de Bouillon, "sacrifice one's self to the public good; but, I confess to you, I am now almost exhausted. My spirit is willing, my head is clear, but this demon, the gout, galls me! I confess, if the court would do justice to my claims, and give to the head of my house the title of prince, and if my brother De Turenne were reinstated in his command, I would return to my estates and leave the court and the parliament to settle things between themselves as they could."

"You are perfectly right, my lord."

"You think so? At this very moment the court is making overtures to me: hitherto I repulsed them; but since such men as you assure me that I am wrong in doing so, I've a good mind to follow your advice, and to accept a proposition made to me by the Duc de Chatillon, just now."

"Accept it, my lord, accept it," said Aramis.

He and Athos then took their departure.

"And what think you of the Duc de Bouillon?" asked Aramis of his friend.

"I think," answered Athos, "that we have acted wisely in not breathing a syllable of the reason for our visit; and now let us proceed forthwith to the Hotel de Vendôme." It was ten o'clock when they reached it, and they found it as closely guarded as that of the Duc de Bouillon. As they entered

the courtyard, two cavaliers were coming out, and Athos and Aramis recognized the Duc de Chatillon and Monsieur de Flamareus, who had evidently been paying their respects to the Duc de Beaufort.

Scarcely had the two friends dismounted when a man approached them, and after looking at them for an instant by the doubtful light of the lantern, hung in the center of the courtyard, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and ran to embrace them.

"Rochefort!" cried the two friends.

"Yes! We arrived four or five days ago from the Vendôme, as you know, and we are going to give Mazarin something to do. You are still with us, I presume?"

"More than ever. And the duke?"

"Furious against the cardinal. You know his success—our dear duke? He's really the king of Paris; he can't go out without being almost stifled."

"Ah! so much the better! Can we have the honor of seeing his highness?"

"I shall be proud to present you;" and Rochefort walked on; every door was opened to him. Monsieur de Beaufort was at supper, but he rose quickly on hearing the two friends announced.

"Ah!" he cried, "by Jove! you're welcome, sirs. You are coming to sup with me, are you not? Boisgoli, tell Noirmont that I have two guests. You know Noirmont, do you not? The successor of Father Marteau, who makes the excellent pies you know about. Boisgoli, let him send one of his best, but not such an one as he made for La Ramée. Thank God! we don't want either ropes, ladders, or pears of anguish."

"My lord," said Athos, "do not let us disturb you. We came merely to inquire after your health and to take your orders."

"As to my health, since it has stood five years of prison, with Monsieur de Chevigny to boot, 'tis excellent! As to my orders, since every one gives his own commands in our party, I shall end, if this goes on, in giving none at all."

"In short, my lord," said Athos, glancing at Aramis, "your highness is discontented with your party?"

"Discontented, sir; say that my highness is furious! To such a degree, I assure you, though I would not say so to others, that if the queen, acknowledging the injuries she has done me, would recall my mother, and give me the reversion of the admiralty, which belonged to my father, and was prom-

ised to me at his death—well! I should not be long before I could train dogs to say, ‘that there were greater traitors in France than the Cardinal Mazarin.’”

At this Athos and Aramis could not help exchanging not only a look but a smile; and, had they not known it for a fact, they could have been sure that De Chatillon and De Flamareus had been there before them.

“My lord!” said Athos, “we are satisfied; we came here only to express our loyalty, and to say that we are at your lordship’s service, and his most faithful servants,” and, bowing low, they went out.

“My dear Athos,” cried Aramis; “I think you consented to accompany me only to give me a lesson—God forgive me!”

“Wait a little, Aramis; it will be time for us to perceive my motive when we have paid our visit to the coadjutor.”

“Let us, then, go to the archiepiscopal palace,” said Aramis.

They directed their horses to the city. On arriving at the cradle from which Paris sprang, they found it inundated with water; and it was again necessary to take a boat. The palace rose from the bosom of the water, and, to see the number of boats around it, one would have fancied one’s self not in Paris, but in Venice. Some of these boats were dark and mysterious, others noisy, and lighted up with torches. The friends glided in between this confusion of embarkations, and landed in their turn. All the palace was under water, but a kind of staircase had been fixed to the lower walls; and the only difference was that, instead of entering by the doors, people entered by the windows.

Thus did Athos and Aramis make their appearance in the antechamber, where about a dozen noblemen were collected and waiting.

“Good heavens!” said Aramis to Athos; “does the coadjutor intend to indulge himself in the pleasure of making us wait in his antechamber?”

“My dear friend, we must take people as we find them. The coadjutor is at this moment one of the seven kings of Paris, and has a court. Let us send in our names, and if he does not send us a suitable message, we will leave him to his own affairs, or to those of France. Let us call one of these lackeys, with a demi-pistole in one hand. Exactly so—ah! if I’m not mistaken, here’s Bazin. Come here, fellow!”

Bazin, who was crossing the antechamber majestically in his clerical dress, turned round to see who the impertinent gentleman was who thus addressed him; but seeing the

friends, he went up to them quickly, and expressed great delight on seeing them.

"A truce to compliments," said Aramis; "we want to see the coadjutor, and instantly, as we are in haste."

"Certainly, sir, it is not such lords as you are who are allowed to wait in the antechamber, only just now he has a secret conference with Monsieur de Bruy."

"De Bruy!" cried the friends; "'tis then useless our seeing Monsieur the Coadjutor this evening," said Aramis, "so we give it up."

And they hastened to quit the palace, followed by Bazin, who was lavish of his bows and compliments.

At ten o'clock the next day the friends met again.

There were still no tidings of D'Artagnan or Porthos, whom they had expected. Raoul was gone to Saint Cloud, in consequence of a message from the Prince de Condé, and had not returned; and Aramis had not been able to see Madame de Longueville, who was installed at the Hotel de Ville, where she played the part of queen, not having quite courage enough, as Aramis remarked, to take up her abode at the Palais Royal or the Tuileries.

"Well, then," said Athos, "now then, what shall we do this evening?"

"You forget, my friend, that we have work cut out for us in the direction of Charenton; I hope to see Monsieur de Chatillon, whom I've hated a long time, there."

"Why have you hated him?"

"Because he is the brother of Coligny."

"Ah, true! he who presumed to be a rival of yours, for which he was severely punished—that ought to satisfy you."

"Yes, but it does not; I am rancorous, the only point which shows me to be a churchman. Do you understand? Let us go, then, Aramis."

"If we go, there is no time to lose; the drum has beat; I saw cannon on the road; I saw the citizens in order of battle on the Place of the Hotel de Ville; certainly the fight will be in the direction of Charenton, as the Duc de Chatillon said."

"Poor creatures!" said Athos, "who are going to be killed, in order that Monsieur de Bouillon should have his estate at Sedan restored to him, that the reversion of the admiralty should be given to the Duc de Beaufort, and that the coadjutor should be made a cardinal."

"Come! come, dear Athos, you will not be so philosophical if your Raoul should happen to be in all this confusion."

"Perhaps you speak the truth, Aramis."

"Well, let us go, then, where the fighting is, for that is the most likely place to meet with D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Raoul. Stop, there are a fine body of citizens passing; quite attractive, by Jupiter! and their captain! see! in the true military style."

"What ho!" said Grimaud.

"What?" asked Athos.

"Planchet, sir."

"Lieutenant yesterday," said Aramis, "a captain to-day, a colonel, doubtless, to-morrow: in a week the fellow will be a field-marshal of France."

"Ask him some questions about the fight," said Athos.

Planchet, prouder than ever of his new duties, deigned to explain to the two gentlemen that he was ordered to take up his position on the Place Royale, where two hundred men formed the rear of the army of Paris, and to march toward Charenton, when necessary.

"The day will be warm," said Planchet, in a warlike tone.

But the friends, not caring to mix themselves up with the citizens, set off toward Charenton, and passed the valley of Fecamp, darkened by the presence of armed troops.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE BATTLE OF CHARENTON.

As Athos and Aramis proceeded, and passed different companies on the road, they became aware that they were arriving near the field of battle.

"Ah! my friend," cried Athos suddenly, "where have you brought us? I fancy I perceive around us faces of different officers in the royal army: is it not the Duc de Chatillon himself who is coming toward us with his brigadiers?"

"Good-day, sirs," said the duke advancing; "you are puzzled by what you see here, but one word will explain everything. There is now a truce, and a conference. The prince, Monsieur de Retz, the Duc de Beaufort, the Duc de Bouillon are talking over public affairs. Now, one of two things must happen; either matters will be arranged, or they will not be arranged, in which last case I shall be relieved of my command, and we shall still meet again."

"This conference has not then been preconcerted?"

"No; 'tis the result of certain propositions made yesterday by Cardinal Mazarin to the Parisians."

"Where, then, are the plenipotentiaries?" asked Athos.

"At the house of Monsieur de Chauleu, who commands your troops at Charenton. I say your troops, for I presume that you gentlemen are Frondeurs?"

"Yes—almost," said Aramis.

"We are for the king and the princes," added Athos.

"We must understand each other," said the duke; "the king is with us, and his generals are, the Duke of Orleans and the Prince de Conti, although, I must add, 'tis almost impossible now to know what party one is on."

"Yes," answered Athos, "but his right place is in our ranks, with the Prince de Conti, De Beaufort, D'Elbeuf, and De Bouillon; but, my lord, supposing that the conferences are broken off, are you going to try to take Charenton?"

"Such are my orders."

"My lord, since you command the cavalry——"

"Pardon me, I am commander-in-chief."

"So much the better. There is a youth of fifteen years of age, the Vicomte de Bragelonne, attached to the Prince de Conti: has he the honor of being known to you?" inquired Athos, diffident in allowing the skeptical Aramis to perceive how strong were his paternal feelings.

"Yes, surely, he came with the prince; a charming young man; he is one of your friends, then, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Yes, sir," answered Athos, slightly agitated; "so much so, that I wish to see him, if possible."

"Quite possible, sir; do me the favor to accompany me, and I will conduct you to headquarters."

"Halloo, there!" cried Aramis, turning round, "what a noise behind us."

"A stout cavalier coming toward us," said Chatillon; "I recognize the coadjutor, by his Frondist hat."

"And I, the Duc de Beaufort, by his plume of white feathers."

"They are coming full gallop; the prince is with them: ah! he is leaving them."

"They are beating the rappel!" cried Chatillon; "we must find out what's going on."

In fact, they saw the soldiers running to their arms; the trumpets sounded; the drum beat; the Duc de Beaufort drew his sword. On his side, the prince sounded a rappel, and all the officers of the royalist army, mingled momentarily with the Parisian troops, ran to him.

"Gentlemen," cried Chatillon, "the truce is broken, that's evident; they are going to fight; go, then, into Charenton,

for I shall begin in a short time—hark! there's a signal from the prince!"

The cornet of the troop had, in fact, just raised the standard of the prince. "Farewell, till the next time!" cried Chatillon, and he set off, full gallop.

Aramis and Athos turned also and went to salute the coadjutor and the Duc de Beaufort. As to the Duc de Bouillon, he had such a fit of gout as obliged him to return to Paris in a litter; but his place was supplied by the Duc d'Elbeuf and his four sons, ranged around him like a staff. Meantime, between Charenton and the royal army was left a long space, which seemed prepared to serve as a last resting-place for the dead.

"Gentlemen," cried the coadjutor, tightening his sash, which he wore after the fashion of the ancient military prelates, over his archiepiscopal simar, "there's the enemy approaching us; we shall, I hope, "save them the half of their journey."

And, without caring whether he were followed or not, he set off: his regiment, which bore the name of the regiment of Corinth, from the name of his archbishopric, darted after him, and began the fight. Monsieur de Beaufort sent his cavalry toward Etampes, and Monsieur de Chauleu, who defended the place, was ready to resist an assault, or, if the enemy were repulsed, to attempt a sortie.

The battle soon became general, and the coadjutor performed miracles of valor. His proper vocation had always been the sword, and he was delighted whenever he could draw it from the scabbard, no matter for whom or against whom.

Chauleu, whose fire at one time repulsed the royal regiments, thought that the moment was come to pursue it; but it was re-formed, and led again to the charge, by the Duc de Chatillon, in person. This charge was so fierce, so skillfully conducted, that Chauleu was almost surrounded. He commanded a retreat, which began, step by step, foot by foot—unhappily, in an instant, he fell, mortally wounded. De Chatillon saw him fall, and announced it, in a loud voice, to his men, which raised their spirits, and completely disheartened their enemies, so that every man thought only of his personal safety, and tried to regain the trenches, where the coadjutor was trying to reform his disorganized regiment.

Suddenly, a squadron of cavalry came to an encounter with the royal troops, who were entering, pell mell, into the entrenchments with the fugitives. Athos and Aramis charged

at the head of their squadron; Aramis with his sword and pistol in his hands; Athos, with his sword in the scabbard, his pistol in his saddle bags; calm and cool as if on the parade, except that his noble and beautiful countenance became sad as he saw slaughtered, so many men who were sacrificed on the one side to the obstinacy of royalty, on the other to the rancorous party feeling of the princes; Aramis, on the contrary, struck right and left, and was almost delirious with excitement. His bright eyes kindled, and his mouth, so finely formed, assumed a dark smile; every blow he aimed was sure, and his pistol finished the deed—and annihilated the wounded wretch who tried to rise again.

On the opposite side, two cavaliers, one covered with a gilt cuirass, the other wearing simply a buff doublet, from which fell the sleeves of a vest of blue velvet, charged in front. The cavalier in the gilt cuirass fell upon Aramis and hit him a blow that Aramis parried with his wonted skill.

"Ah! 'tis you, Monsieur de Chatillon," cried the chevalier, "welcome to you—I await you."

"I hope I have not made you wait too long, sir," said the duke; "at all events, here I am."

"Monsieur de Chatillon," cried Aramis, taking from his saddle bags a second pistol, "I think if your pistols have been discharged, you are a dead man."

"Thank God, sir, they are not!"

And the duke, pointing his pistol at Aramis, fired. But Aramis instantly bent his head, and the ball passed without touching him.

"Oh! you've missed me," cried Aramis; "but I swear to heaven, I will not miss you."

"If I give you time!" cried the duke, spurring on his horse, and rushing upon him with his drawn sword.

Aramis awaited him with that terrible smile which was peculiar to him on such occasions; and Athos, who saw the duke advancing toward Aramis with the rapidity of lightning, was just going to cry out "fire! fire then!" when the shot was fired, De Chatillon opened his arms and fell back on the cruppers of his horse.

The ball had penetrated into his chest through the crank of his cuirass.

"I am a dead man," he said, and he fell from his horse to the ground.

"I told you this; I am now grieved I have kept my word; can I be of any use to you?"

Chatillon made a sign with his hand, and Aramis was about

to dismount, when he received a violent shock in the side, 'twas a thrust from a sword, but his cuirass turned aside the blow.

He turned round and seized his new antagonist by the wrist, when he started back, exclaiming, "Raoul!"

"Raoul?" cried Athos.

The young man recognized at the same time the voice of his father and that of the Chevalier d'Herblay; several chevaliers in the Parisian forces rushed at that instant on Raoul, but Aramis protected him with his sword.

"My prisoner!" he cried.

At this crisis of the battle, the prince, who had seconded De Chatillon in the second line, appeared in the midst of the fight; his eagle eye made him known, and his blows proclaimed the hero.

On seeing him the regiment of Corinth, which the coadjutor had not been able to reorganize in spite of his efforts, threw itself into the midst of the Parisian forces, put them into confusion, and re-entered Charenton flying. The coadjutor, dragged along with his fugitive forces, passed near the group formed by Athos, Raoul, and Aramis. Aramis could not in his jealousy avoid being pleased at the coadjutor's misfortune, and was about to make some bon-mot, more witty than correct, when Athos stopped him.

"On, on!" he cried, "this is no moment for compliments; or rather back, for the battle seems to be lost by the Frondeurs."

"That's a matter of indifference to me," said Aramis, "I came here only to meet De Chatillon; I have met him, I am contented; 'tis something to have met De Chatillon in a duel!"

The three cavaliers continued their road on a full gallop.

"What were you doing in the battle, my friend?" inquired Athos of the youth; "'twas not your right place, I think, as you were not equipped for an engagement!"

"I had no intention of fighting to-day, sir; I was charged, indeed, with a mission for the cardinal, and had set out for Rueil, when seeing Monsieur de Chatillon charge, a wish possessed me to charge at his side. Two cavaliers from the Parisian troops told me that you were there."

"What! you knew we were there, and yet wished to kill your friend and the chevalier?"

"I did not recognize the chevalier in his armor, sir!" said Raoul, blushing; "though I might have known him by his skill and coolness in danger."

"Thank you for the compliment, my young friend," replied Aramis, "we can see from whom you learned lessons of courtesy; you were going, then, to Rueil?"

"Yes! I have a dispatch from the prince to his eminence."

"You must still deliver it," said Athos.

"No false generosity, count! the fate of our friends—to say nothing of our own—is, perhaps, in that very dispatch."

"This young man must not, however, fail in his duty," said Athos.

"In the first place, count, this youth is our prisoner; you seem to forget that. What I propose to do is fair in war, and the conquered must not be dainty in the true choice of means."

"Give him the dispatch, Raoul! you are the chevalier's prisoner."

Raoul gave it up reluctantly; Aramis instantly seized and read it.

"You," he said, "you, who are so trusting, read and reflect that there is something in this letter important for us to see."

Athos took the letter, frowning, but an idea that he should hear something in this letter about D'Artagnan conquered his unwillingness to finish it.

"My lord, I shall send this evening to your eminence in order to reinforce the troop of Monsieur de Comminges, the ten men whom you demand. They are good soldiers, fit to support the two violent adversaries whose address and resolution your eminence is fearful of."

"Oh!" cried Athos.

"Well," said Aramis, "why think you about these two enemies, when it requires, besides Comminges' troop, ten good soldiers to guard; are they not as like as two drops of water to D'Artagnan and Porthos?"

"We'll search Paris all to-day," said Athos, "and if we have no news this evening, we will return to the road to Picardy; and I feel no doubt that, thanks to D'Artagnan's ready invention, we shall then find some clue which will solve our doubts."

It was, then, with a sentiment of uneasiness whether Planchet, who alone could give them information, was alive or not, that the friends returned to the Palais Royal; to their great surprise they found all the citizens still encamped there, drinking and bantering each other; although, doubtless, mourned by their families, who thought they were at Charenton, in the thick of the firing.

Athos and Aramis again questioned Planchet, but he had

seen nothing of D'Artagnan; they wished to take Planchet with them, but he could not leave his troop; who, at five o'clock returned home, saying that they were returning from the battle, whereas they had never lost sight of the equestrian statue in bronze of Louis XIII.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE ROAD TO PICARDY.

IN leaving Paris, Athos and Aramis well knew that they would be encountering great danger; but one can imagine how such men look at a question of personal risk. Paris, however, itself was not tranquil; food began to be scarce; and wheresoever any of the Prince de Conti's generals wanted to succeed him in his command, some little *émeute*, which he always put a stop to instantly, took place.

In one of these risings the Duc de Beaufort pillaged the house and library of Mazarin, in order to give the populace, as he said, something to gnaw at. Athos and Aramis left Paris after this *coup d'état*, which took place on the very evening of the day in which the Parisians had been beaten at Charenton.

They quitted Paris, beholding it abandoned to extreme want bordering on famine: agitated by fear, torn by faction. Parisians and Frondeurs as they were, the two friends expected to find the same misery, the same fears, the same intrigues in the enemy's camp; but what was their surprise, after passing St. Denis, to hear that, at St. Germain, people were singing and laughing, and leading a cheerful life. The two gentlemen traveled by by-ways, in order not to encounter Mazarinists, who were scattered about the Isle of France, and also to escape the Frondeurs, who were in possession of Normandy, and who would not have failed to conduct them to the Duc de Longueville, in order that he might know whether they were friends or enemies. Having escaped these dangers, they returned by the main road to Boulogne, at Abbeville, and followed it step by step, examining every track.

Nevertheless, they were still in a state of uncertainty. Several inns were visited by them, several innkeepers questioned, without a single clue being given to guide their inquiries. When at Montreuil Athos felt, upon the table, that something rough was touching his delicate fingers. He turned up the cloth, and found these hieroglyphics carved upon the wood with a knife:

"Port D'Art 2d February."

"This is capital," said Athos to Aramis; "we were to have slept here, but we cannot, we must push on." They rode forward, and reached Abbeville. There the great number of inns puzzled them; they could not go to all; how could they guess in which he whom they were seeking had stayed.

"Trust me," said Aramis; "do not expect to find anything in Abbeville. If we had only been looking for Porthos, Porthos would have fixed himself in one of the finest of the hotels, and we could easily have traced him. But D'Artagnan is devoid of such weaknesses. Porthos would have found it very difficult even to make him see that he was dying of hunger; he has gone on his road as inexorable as fate, and we must seek him somewhere else."

They continued their route; it had now become a weary and almost hopeless task; and had it not been for the three-fold motives of honor, friendship, and gratitude, implanted in their hearts, these two travelers would have given up, many a time, their rides over the sand, their interrogatories of the peasantry, and their close inspection of faces.

They proceeded to Compiègne.

Athos began to despair. His noble nature felt that their ignorance was a sort of reflection upon them. They had not looked well enough for their lost friends. They had not shown sufficient pertinacity in their inquiries. They were willing and ready to retrace their steps, when, in crossing the suburb which leads to the gates of the town, upon a white wall which was at the corner of a street turning round the rampart, Athos cast his eyes upon a drawing in black chalk, which represented, with the awkwardness of a first attempt, two cavaliers riding furiously, and carrying a roll of paper, on which were written these words: "They are following us."

"Oh!" exclaimed Athos; "here it is as clear as day. Pursued as he was, D'Artagnan would not have tarried here five minutes had he been pressed very closely, which gives us hopes that he may have succeeded in escaping."

Athos shook his head.

"Had he escaped we should either have seen him or have heard him spoken of."

"You are right, Aramis; let us travel on."

To describe the impatience and uneasiness of these two gentlemen would be impossible. Anxiety took possession of the tender and constant heart of Athos; and impatience was the torment of the impulsive Aramis. They galloped on for two or three hours with the frenzy of two knights in pursuit.

All at once, in a narrow pass, they perceived that the road was partially barricaded by an enormous stone. It had evidently been rolled across the path by some arm of gigantic power.

Aramis stopped.

"Oh!" he said, looking at the stone, "this is the work either of Ajax, or of Briareus, or of Porthos. Let us get down, count, and examine this rock."

They both alighted. The stone had been brought with the evident intention of barricading the road; but some one, having perceived the obstacle, had partially turned it aside.

With the assistance of Blaisois and Grimaud, the friends succeeded in turning the stone over. Upon the side next the ground was written:

"Eight of the light dragoons are pursuing us. If we reach Compiègne, we shall stop at the Peacock. It is kept by a friend of ours."

"This is something positive," said Athos, "let us go to the Peacock."

"Yes," answered Aramis, "but if we are to get there we must rest our horses, for they are almost broken-winded"

Aramis was right; they stopped at the first tavern, and made each horse swallow a double quantity of corn steeped in wine; they gave them three hours' rest, and then set off again. The men themselves were almost killed with fatigue, but hope supported them.

In six hours they reached Compiègne, and alighted at the Peacock. The host proved to be a worthy man, as bald as a Chinaman. They asked him if some time ago he had not received in his house two gentlemen who were pursued by dragoons: without answering, he went out and brought in the blade of a rapier.

"Do you know that?" he asked.

Athos merely glanced at it.

"'Tis D'Artagnan's sword," he said.

"Does it belong to the smaller, or to the larger of the two?" asked the host.

"To the smaller."

"I see that you are the friends of these gentlemen."

"Well, what has happened to them?"

"They were pursued by eight of the light dragoons, who rode into the courtyard, before they had time to close the gate; but these men would not have succeeded in taking them prisoners had they not been assisted by twenty soldiers of the regiment of Italians in the king's service, who are in

garrison in this town—so that your friends were overpowered by numbers.”

“Arrested, were they?” asked Athos; “is it known why?”

“No, sir, they were carried off directly, and had not time to tell me why; but, as soon as they were gone, I found this broken blade of a sword—as I was helping in raising up two dead men, and five or six wounded ones.”

“’Tis still a consolation that they were not wounded,” said Aramis.

“Where were they taken?” asked Athos.

“Toward the town of Louvres,” was the reply.

The two friends, having agreed to leave Blaisois and Grimaud at Compiègne with the horses, resolved to take post horses; and having snatched a hasty dinner, they continued their journey to Louvres.

Here they found only one inn, in which was drunk a liquor which still preserves its reputation in our own time, and which is still made in that town.

“Let us alight here,” said Athos, “D’Artagnan will not have let slip an opportunity of drinking a glass of this liquor, and at the same time leaving some trace of himself.”

They went into the town, and asked for two glasses of liquor, at the counter—as their friends must have done before them. The counter was covered generally with a plate of pewter; upon this plate was written with the point of a large pin: “Rueil D”

“They went to Rueil,” cried Aramis.

“Let us go to Rueil,” said Athos. “Had I been as great a friend of Jonah’s as I am of D’Artagnan, I should have followed him even into the whale itself; and you would have done the same,” observed Athos.

“Certainly—but you make me better than I am, dear count. Had I been alone, I should scarcely have gone to Rueil without great caution.”

They then set off for Rueil. Here the deputies of the parliament had just arrived, in order to enter upon those famous conferences which were to last three weeks, and produced, eventually, that shameful peace, at the end of which the prince was arrested. Rueil was crowded with advocates, presidents, and counselors, who came from the Parisians; and, on the side of the court, with officers and guards; it was, therefore, easy, in the midst of this confusion, to remain as much unobserved as might be wished; besides, the conferences implied a truce, and to arrest two gentlemen, even Frondeurs, at this time, would have been an attack on the rights of the people.

The two friends mingled in the crowd, and fancied that every one was occupied with the same thought that tormented them.

But every one was engrossed by articles and reforms. It was the advice of Athos to go straight to the ministers.

"My friend," said Aramis, "take care; our safety proceeds from our obscurity. If we were to make ourselves known, we should be sent to rejoin our friends in some deep ditch, from which the devil himself cannot take us out. Let us try not to find them out by accident, but from our own notions. Arrested at Compiègne, they have been carried to Rueil; at Rueil they have been questioned by the cardinal, who has either kept them near him, or sent them to St. Germain. As to the Bastille, they are not there, though the Bastille is especially for the Frondeurs. They are not dead, for the death of D'Artagnan would make a sensation. Do not let us despond—but wait at Rueil, for my conviction is that they are at Rueil. But what ails you? you are pale."

"It is this," answered Athos, with a trembling voice, "I remember that, at the Castle of Rueil, the Cardinal Richelieu has some horrible 'oubliettes' constructed."

"Oh! never fear," said Aramis. "Richelieu was a gentleman, our equal in birth, our superior in position. He could, like the king, touch the greatest of us on the head, and in touching them, make the head shake on the shoulders. But Mazarin is a low-born rogue, who could only take us by the neck, like an archer. Be calm—for I am sure that D'Artagnan and Porthos are alive and well."

"Well," resumed Athos, "I recur to my first proposal. I know no better means than to act with candor. I shall seek not Mazarin, but the queen—and say to her, 'Madame, restore to us our two servants and our two friends.'"

Aramis shook his head.

"'Tis a last resource; but let us not employ it till it is imperatively necessary; let us rather continue our researches."

They continued their inquiries, and at last met with a light dragoon, who had formed one of the guard which had escorted D'Artagnan to Rueil, by which they knew that they had entered that house.

Athos, therefore, perpetually recurred to his proposed interview with the queen.

"I shall go," he said "to the queen."

"Well, then," answered Aramis, "pray tell me a day or two beforehand, that I may take that opportunity of going to Paris."

"To whom?"

"Zounds! how do I know? perhaps to Madame de Longueville. She is all powerful yonder; she will help me. But send me word should you be arrested, for then I will return directly."

"Why do you not take your chance, and be arrested with me?"

"No, I thank you."

"Should we, by being arrested, be all four together again, we should not, I am sure, be twenty-four hours in prison without getting free."

"My friend, since I killed Chatillon, the adored of the ladies of St. Germain, I have too great a celebrity not to fear a prison doubly. The queen is likely to follow Mazarin's counsels, and to have me tried. Do you think that she loves this Italian so much as they say she does?"

"She loved an Englishman passionately."

"Well, my friend, she is a woman."

"No, no, you are deceived—she is a queen."

"Dear friend, I shall sacrifice myself, and go and see Anne of Austria."

"Adieu, Athos, I am going to raise an army."

"For what purpose?"

"To come back, and besiege Rueil."

"Where shall we meet again?"

"At the foot of the cardinal's gallows."

The two friends parted—Aramis to return to Paris, Athos to take some measures preparatory to an interview with the queen.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE GRATITUDE OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA.

ATHOS found much less difficulty than he had expected in obtaining an audience of Anne of Austria; it was granted, and was to take place after her morning's "levée," at which, in accordance with the rights he derived from his birth, he was entitled to be present. A vast crowd filled the apartments of St. Germain; Anne had never, at the Louvre, had so large a court; but this crowd represented chiefly the second class of nobility, which the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Beaufort, and the coadjutor assembled around them—the first men in France.

The greatest possible gayety prevailed at the court. The particular characteristic of this was, that more songs were made than cannon fired during its continuance. La Court made songs on the Parisians, and the Parisians on the court; and the wounds, though not mortal, were painful, as they were made by the arms of ridicule.

In the midst of this seeming hilarity, nevertheless, people's minds were uneasy. Was Mazarin to remain the favorite and minister of the queen? was he to be carried back by the wind which had blown him there? Every one hoped so, so that the minister felt that all around him, beneath the homage of the courtiers, lay a fund of hatred, ill disguised by fear and interest. He was ill at ease, and at a loss what to do.

Condé, himself, while fighting for him, lost no opportunity of ridiculing, or of humbling him. The queen, on whom he threw himself, as his sole support, seemed to him, now, very little to be relied upon.

When the hour appointed for the audience arrived, Athos was obliged to stay until the queen, who was waited upon by a new deputation from Paris, had consulted with her minister as to the propriety and manner of receiving them. All were fully engrossed with the affairs of the day, and there could be few opportunities less favorable to make an appeal upon; but Athos was a man of inflexible temper, and insisted on his right of being admitted into the queen's presence. Accordingly, at the close of the audience, she sent for him to her room.

The name of the Count de la Fère was then announced to Anne. Often must she have heard that name, and felt that it had made her heart beat; nevertheless, she remained unmoved, and was contented to look steadfastly at this gentleman, with that set stare which can alone be permitted to a queen.

"Do you come, then, to offer me your services?" she asked, after some moments' silence.

"Yes, madame," replied Athos, shocked at her not recognizing him. Athos had a noble heart, and made, therefore, but a poor courtier.

Anne frowned. Mazarin, who was sitting at a table, folding up papers, as if he had only been a secretary of state, looked up.

"Speak," said the queen.

Mazarin turned again to his papers.

"Madame," resumed Athos, "two of my friends, named

D'Artagnan and Porthos, sent to England by the cardinal, have suddenly disappeared ever since they set foot on the shores of France; no one knows what has become of them."

"Well?" said the queen.

"I address myself, therefore, first to the benevolence of your majesty, that I may know what has become of my friends, reserving to myself, if necessary, the right of appealing afterward to your justice."

"Sir," replied Anne, with a degree of haughtiness, which, to certain persons, became impertinence, "this is the reason that you trouble me in the midst of so many absorbing concerns! An affair for the police! Well, sir, you ought to know that since we left Paris there no longer exists a police."

"I think that your majesty will have no need to apply to the police to know where my friends are, but that if you will deign to interrogate the cardinal, he can reply without any further inquiry than into his own recollections."

"But, God forgive me!" cried Anne, with that disdainful curl of the lip peculiar to her, "I think you can inquire yourself."

"Yes, madame, here I have a right to do so, for it concerns Monsieur d'Artagnan—D'Artagnan," he repeated, in such a manner as to bow down the regal brow beneath the recollections of the weak and erring woman.

The cardinal saw that it was now high time to come to the assistance of Anne.

"Sir," he said, "I can tell what is at present unknown to her majesty. These individuals are under arrest; they disobeyed orders."

"I beg of your majesty, then," said Athos, calm, and not replying to Mazarin, "to take off these arrests from Monsieur d'Artagnan and De Valon."

"What you ask is an affair of discipline and police," said the queen.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan never made such an answer as that when the service of your majesty was concerned," said Athos, bowing with great dignity. He was going toward the door, when Mazarin stopped him.

"You have also been in England, sir?" he said, making a sign to the queen, who was evidently going to issue a severe order.

"I was present at the last hours of Charles I. Poor king! Culpable, at the most, of weakness, how cruelly punished by his subjects. Thrones are at this time shaken, and it is to little purpose for devoted hearts to serve the interests of

princes. This is the second time that Monsieur d'Artagnan has been in England. He went the first time to save the honor of a great queen; the second to avert the death of a great king."

"Sir," said Anne to Mazarin, with an accent from which daily habits of dissimulation could not entirely chase the real expression, "see, if we cannot do something for these gentlemen."

"I wish to do, madame, all that your majesty pleases."

"Do what Monsieur de la Fère requests; that is your name, is it not, sir?"

"I have another name, madame—I am called Athos."

"Madame," said Mazarin, with a smile, "you may be easy—your wishes shall be fulfilled."

"You hear, sir?" said the queen.

"Yes, madame; I expected nothing less from the justice of your majesty. May I not, then, go and see my friends?"

"Yes, sir, you shall see them. But, *à propos*, you belong to the Fronde, do you not?"

"Madame, I serve the king."

"Yes, in your own way."

"My way is the way of all gentlemen; and I know only one way," answered Athos haughtily.

"Go, sir, then," said the queen; "you have obtained what you wish, and we know all we wish to know."

Scarcely, however, had the tapestry closed behind Athos than she said to Mazarin:

"Cardinal, desire them to arrest that insolent fellow before he leaves the court."

"Your majesty," answered Mazarin, "desires me to do only what I was going to ask you to let me do. These bravos, who bring back to our epoch the traditions of the other reign, are troublesome; since there are two of them already there, let us add a third."

Athos was not completely the queen's dupe, but he was not a man to run away merely on suspicion—above all, when distinctly told that he should see his friends again. He waited, then, in the antechamber with impatience, till he should be conducted to them.

He walked to the window, and looked into the court. He saw the deputation from the Parisians enter it; they were coming to sign the definite place for the conference, and to make their bow to the queen. A very imposing escort awaited them without the gates.

Athos was looking on attentively when some one touched him softly on the shoulder.

"Ah! Monsieur de Comminges," he said.

"Yes, count, and charged with a commission for which I beg of you to accept my excuses."

"What is it?"

"Be so good as to give me up your sword, count."

Athos smiled and opened the window.

"Aramis!" he cried.

A gentleman turned round. Athos fancied he had seen him among the crowd. It was Aramis. He bowed with great friendship to the count.

"Aramis!" cried Athos, "I am arrested."

"Good," replied Aramis calmly.

"Sir," said Athos, turning to Comminges, and giving him politely his sword by the hilt—"there is my sword—have the kindness to keep it for me until I shall quit my prison. I prize it—it was given to my ancestors by King Francis I. In his time they armed gentlemen, they did not disarm them. Now, whither do you conduct me?"

"Into my room at first," replied Comminges, "the queen will ultimately decide on the place of your domicile."

Athos followed Comminges without saying a single word.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE ROYALTY OF CARDINAL MAZARIN.

THE arrests produced no sensation, and were almost unknown, and scarcely interrupted the course of events. To the deputation it was formally announced that the queen would receive it.

Accordingly it was admitted to the presence of Anne, who, silent and lofty as ever, listened to the speeches and complaints of the deputies; but when they had finished their harangues, not one of them could say, so calm had been her face, whether she had heard them or not. While thus she was silent, Mazarin, who was present, and knew what the deputies asked, answered in these terms:

"Gentlemen," he said, "I shall join with you in supplicating the queen to put an end to the miseries of her subjects. I have done all in my power to ameliorate them, and yet the belief of the public, you say, is that they proceed from me, an unhappy foreigner who has been unable to please the French. Alas! I have never been understood, and no wonder. I succeeded a man of the most sublime genius that ever up-

held the scepter of France. The memory of Richelieu annihilates me. In vain—were I an ambitious man—should I struggle against such a remembrance as he has left; but that I am not ambitious I am going to prove to you. I own myself conquered. I shall obey the wishes of the people. If Paris has injuries to complain of, who has not some wrongs to be redressed? Paris has been sufficiently punished—enough blood has flowed—enough misery has humbled a town deprived of its king, and of its justice. 'Tis not for me, a private individual, to disunite a queen from her kingdom. Since you require my resignation, I shall retire."

"Then," said Aramis, in his neighbor's ears, "the conferences are over. There is nothing to do but to send Monsieur Mazarin to the most distant frontier, and to take care that he does not return even by that, nor any other entrance, into France."

"One instant, sir," said the man in a gown, whom he addressed; "a plague on't! how fast you go! one may soon see that you're a soldier. There's the article of remunerations and indemnifications to be discussed and set to rights."

"Chancellor," said the queen, turning to this same man, "do you, our old acquaintance, open the conferences. They can take place at Rueil. The cardinal has said several things which have agitated me, therefore I do not speak more fully now. As to his going or staying, I feel too much gratitude to the cardinal not to leave him free in all his actions; he shall do what he wishes to do."

A transient pallor overspread the speaking countenance of the prime minister—he looked at the queen with anxiety. Her face was so passionless, that he was, as every one else was, incapable of reading her thoughts.

"But," added the queen, "in awaiting the cardinal's decisions, let there be, if you please, a reference to the king only."

The deputies bowed, and left the room.

"What!" exclaimed the queen, when the last of them had quitted the apartment, "you would yield to these limbs of the law—those advocates?"

"To promote your majesty's welfare, madame," replied Mazarin, fixing his penetrating eye on the queen; "there's no sacrifice that I would not make."

Anne dropped her head and fell into one of those reveries so habitual with her. Her recollection of Athos came into her mind. His fearless deportment—his words, so firm yet so

dignified, the shades which by one word he had evoked, recalled to her the past in all its intoxication of poetry and romance, youth, beauty, the éclat of love at twenty years of age, the bloody death of Buckingham, the only man whom she ever really loved, and the heroism of those obscure champions who had saved her from the double hatred of Richelieu and of the king.

Mazarin looked at her, and while she deemed herself alone and freed from that world of enemies who sought to spy into her secret thoughts, he read her thoughts in her countenance, as one sees in a transparent lake clouds pass—reflections, like thoughts, of the heavens.

“Must we, then,” asked Anne of Austria, “yield to the storm, purchase a peace, and await patiently and piously for better times?”

Mazarin smiled sarcastically at this speech, which showed that she had taken the minister’s proposal seriously.

Anne’s head was bent down, and she did not see this smile; but finding that her question elicited no reply, she looked up.

“Well, you do not answer, cardinal; what do you think about it?”

“I am thinking, madame, of the allusion made by that insolent gentleman whom you have caused to be arrested, to the Duke of Buckingham—to him whom you suffered to be assassinated—to the Duchess de Chevreuse, whom you suffered to be exiled—to the Duc de Beaufort, whom you exiled; but he made no allusion to me, because he is ignorant of the relation in which I stand to you.”

Anne drew up, as she always did, when anything touched her pride. She blushed, and that she might not answer clasped her beautiful hands till her sharp nails almost pierced them.

“That man has sagacity, honor, and wit, not to mention likewise that he is a man of undoubted resolution. You know something about him, do you not, madame? I shall tell him, therefore, and in doing so I shall confer a personal favor on him, how he is mistaken in regard to me. What is proposed to me would be, in fact, almost an abdication, and an abdication requires reflection.”

“An abdication?” repeated Anne; “I thought, sir, that it was only kings who abdicated?”

“Well,” replied Mazarin, “and am I not almost a king—king, indeed, of France? Thrown over the foot of the royal bed, my simar, madame, is not unlike the mantle worn by a king.”

This is one of the humiliations which Mazarin made Anne undergo more frequently than any other, and which bowed her head with shame. Queen Elizabeth and Catherine II. of Russia are the only two monarchs on record who were at once sovereigns and lovers. Anne of Austria looked with a sort of terror at the threatening aspect of the cardinal—his physiognomy in such moments was not destitute of a certain grandeur.

"Sir," she replied, "did I not say, and did you not hear me say to those people, that you should do as you pleased?"

"In that case," said Mazarin, "I think it must please me best to remain: not only on account of my own interest, but for your safety."

"Remain, then, sir; nothing can be more agreeable to me; only do not allow me to be insulted."

"You are referring to the demands of the rebels, and to the tone in which they stated them? Patience! They have selected a field of battle on which I am an abler general than they are—that of a conference. No, we shall beat them by merely temporizing. They want food already. They will be ten times worse off in a week."

"Ah, yes! Good heavens! I know it will end in that way; but it is not they who taunt me with the most wounding reproaches—but——"

"I understand; you mean to allude to the recollections perpetually revived by these three gentlemen. However, we have them safe in prison: and they are just sufficiently culpable for us to keep them in prison as long as is convenient to us. One, only, is still not in our power, and braves us. But, devil take him! we shall soon succeed in sending him to rejoin his companions. We have accomplished more difficult things than that. In the first place, I have, as a precaution, shut up, at Rueil, near me, under my own eyes, within reach of my hand, the two most intractable ones. To-day the third will be there also."

"As long as they are in prison, all will be well," said Anne; "but one of these days they will get out."

"Yes; if your majesty releases them."

"Ah!" exclaimed Anne, following the train of her own thoughts on such occasions; "one regrets Paris."

"Why so?"

"On account of the Bastille, sir: which is so strong and so secure."

"Madame, these conferences will bring us peace; when we have peace we shall regain Paris; with Paris, the Bastille, and our three bullies shall rot therein."

Anne frowned slightly, when Mazarin, in taking leave, kissed her hand.

Mazarin, after this half humble, half gallant attention, went away. Anne followed him with her eyes, and as he withdrew, at every step he took, a disdainful smile was seen playing, then gradually burst upon her lips.

"I once," she said, "despised the love of a cardinal who never said 'I shall do,' but 'I have done.' That man knew of retreats more secure than Rueil—darker, and more silent even than the Bastille. Oh, the degenerate world!"

CHAPTER LXXX.

PRECAUTIONS.

AFTER quitting Anne, Mazarin took the road to Rueil, where he usually resided; in those times of disturbance he went about with numerous followers, and often disguised himself. In the military dress he was indeed, as we have before stated, a very handsome man.

In the court of the old château of St. Germain, he entered his coach, and reached the Seine at Chalon. The prince had supplied him with fifty light horse, not so much by way of a guard, as to show the deputies how readily the queen's generals dispersed their troops, and to prove that they might be scattered about at pleasure. Athos, on horseback, without his sword, and kept in sight by Comminges, followed the cardinal in silence. Grimaud, finding that his master had been arrested, fell back into the ranks, near Aramis, without saying a word, and as if nothing had happened.

Grimaud had, indeed, during twenty-two years of service, seen his master extricate himself from so many difficulties, that nothing made him uneasy.

At the branching off of the road toward Paris, Aramis, who had followed in the cardinal's suite, turned back. Mazarin went to the right hand, and Aramis could see the prisoner disappear at the turning of the avenue. Athos, at the same moment, moved by a similar impulse, looked back also. The two friends exchanged a simple inclination of the head, and Aramis put his finger to his hat, as if to bow; Athos, alone, comprehending by that signal that he had some project in his head.

Ten minutes afterward, Mazarin entered the court of that château which his predecessor had built for him at Rueil; as he alighted, Comminges approached him.

"My lord," he asked, "where does your eminence wish Monsieur Comte de la Fère to be lodged?"

"Certainly in the pavilion of the orangery—in front of the pavilion where the guard is. I wish every respect shown to the count, although he is the prisoner of her majesty the queen."

"My lord," answered Comminges, "he begs to be taken into the place where Monsieur d'Artagnan is confined—that is, in the hunting lodge opposite the orangery."

Mazarin thought for an instant.

Comminges saw that he was undecided.

"'Tis a very strong post," he resumed; "and forty good men, tried soldiers, and consequently having nothing to do with Frondeurs, nor any interest in the Fronde."

"If we put these three men together, Monsieur Comminges," said Mazarin, "we must double the guard, and we are not rich enough in defenders to commit such acts of prodigality."

Comminges smiled; Mazarin read, and construed that smile.

"You do not know these men, *Monson* Comminges, but I know them—first, personally; also, by hearsay. I sent them to carry aid to King Charles, and they performed prodigies to save him: had it not been for an adverse destiny, that beloved monarch would, this day, have been among us."

"But, since they served your eminence so well, why are they, my lord cardinal, in prison?"

"In prison?" asked Mazarin; "and when has Rueil been a prison?"

"Ever since there were prisoners in it," answered Comminges.

"These gentlemen, Comminges, are not prisoners," returned Mazarin, with his ironical smile, "but guests; and guests so precious that I have put a grating before each of their windows, and bolts to their doors, that they may not be weary of being my visitors. So much do I esteem them, that I am going to make the Count de la Fère a visit, that I may converse with him *tete-à-tete*; and that we may not be disturbed at our interview, you must conduct him, as I said before, into the pavilion of the orangery; that, you know, is my daily promenade."

Comminges bowed, and returned to impart to Athos the result of his request. Athos, who had been awaiting the cardinal's decision with outward composure, but secret uneasiness, then entreated that Comminges would do him one favor, which was to intimate to D'Artagnan that he was placed in

the pavilion of the orangery for the purpose of receiving a visit from the cardinal, and that he should profit by the opportunity, in order to ask for some mitigation of their close imprisonment.

"Which cannot last," interrupted Comminges, "the cardinal said so; there is no prison here."

"But there are oubliettes!" replied Athos, smiling.

"Oh! that's a different thing; yes—I know there are traditions of that sort," said Comminges: it was in the time of the other cardinal, who was a great nobleman; but our Mazarin—impossible! an Italian adventurer could not go to such lengths toward such men as ourselves. Oubliettes are employed as a means of kingly vengeance, and a low-born fellow such as he is dare not have recourse to them. No, no, be easy on that score. I shall, however, inform Monsieur D'Artagnan of your arrival here."

Comminges then led the count to a room on the ground floor of a pavilion, at the end of the orangery. They passed through a courtyard, as they went, full of soldiers and courtiers. In the center of this court, in the form of a horse-shoe, were the buildings occupied by Mazarin, and at each wing the pavilion (or smaller building) where D'Artagnan was, and that, level with the orangery, where Athos was to be. Behind each end of these two wings extended the park.

Athos, when he reached his appointed room, observed, through the gratings of his window, walls and roofs; and was told, on inquiry, by Comminges, that he was looking on the back of the pavilion where D'Artagnan was confined.

"Yes, 'tis too true," said Comminges, "'tis almost a prison; but what a singular fancy this is of yours, count—you, who are the very flower of our nobility—to go and spend your valor and your loyalty among these upstarts, the Frondeists! Really and truly, if ever I thought that I had a friend in the ranks of the royal army, it was you. A Frondeur! you, the Comte de la Fère, on the side of Broussel, Blancmesnil, and Viole! For shame! you, a Frondeur!"

"On my word of honor," said Athos, "one must be either a Mazarinist or a Frondeur. For a long time I had these words whispered in my ears, and I chose the last; at any rate, it is a French word. And now, I am a Frondeur—not of Broussel's party, nor of Blancmesnil's, nor am I with Viole—but with the Duc de Beaufort, the Ducs de Bouillon and D'Elbeuf; with princes, not with presidents, councilors, and low-born lawyers. Besides, what a charming thing it would have been to serve the cardinal! Look at that wall—without

a single window—which tells you fine things about Mazarin's gratitude!"

"Yes," replied De Comminges, "more especially if that could reveal how Monsieur D'Artagnan for this last week has been swearing at him."

"Poor D'Artagnan," said Athos, with that charming melancholy which was one of the external traits of his character, "so brave, so good, so terrible to the enemies of those whom he loves; you have two unruly prisoners there, sir."

"Unruly," Comminges smiled, "you wish to make me afraid, I suppose. When he came here, Monsieur D'Artagnan provoked and braved all the soldiers and inferior officers, in order, I suppose, to have his sword back—that mood lasted some time—but now, he's as gentle as a lamb, and sings Gascon songs which make one die with laughing."

"And De Valon?" asked Athos.

"Ah, he's quite another sort of person—a formidable gentleman, indeed. The first day he broke all the doors in with a single push of his shoulder; and I expected to see him leave Rueil in the same way as Samson left Gaza. But his temper cooled down like his friend's—he not only gets used to his captivity, but jokes about it."

"So much the better," said Athos; and, on reflection, he felt convinced that this improvement in the spirits of the two captives proceeded from some plan formed by D'Artagnan for their escape.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

STRENGTH AND SAGACITY.

Now let us pass the orangery, to the hunting lodge. At the extremity of the courtyard, where, close to a portico formed of Ionic columns, there were dog-kennels, rose an oblong building, the pavilion of the orangery, a half circle, inclosing the court of honors. It was in this pavilion, on the ground floor, that D'Artagnan and Porthos were confined, suffering the hours of a long imprisonment in a manner suitable to each different temperament.

D'Artagnan was walking about like a tiger, his eye fixed, growling as he paced along by the bars of a window looking upon the yard of servants' offices.

Porthos was ruminating over an excellent dinner which had been served up to him.

The one seemed to be deprived of reason, yet he was meditating. The other seemed to meditate, yet he was sleeping. But his sleep was a nightmare, which might be guessed by the incoherent manner in which he snored.

"Look," said D'Artagnan, "day is declining. It must be nearly four o'clock. We have been in this place nearly eighty-three hours."

"Hem!" muttered Porthos, with a kind of pretense of answering.

"Did you hear, eternal sleeper?" cried D'Artagnan, irritated that any one could doze during the day, when he had the greatest difficulty in sleeping during the night.

"What?" said Porthos.

"I say we have been here eighty-three hours."

"'Tis your fault," answered Porthos.

"How, my fault?"

"Yes, I offered to you to escape."

"By tearing down an iron bar and pushing in a door, Porthos. People like us cannot just go out as they like; besides, going out of this room is not everything."

"Well, then, let us kill the sentinel, and then we shall have arms."

"Yes; but before we can kill him—and he is hard to kill, that Swiss—he will shriek out, and the whole picket will come, and we shall be taken like foxes—we, who are lions—and thrown into some dungeon, where we shall not even have the consolation of seeing this frightful gray sky of Rueil, which is no more like the sky of Tarbes than the moon to the sun. Lackaday! if we only had some one to instruct us about the physical and moral topography of this castle. Ah! when one thinks that for twenty years—during which time I did not know what to do with myself—it never occurred to me to come to study Rueil. And after all, 'tis impossible but that Master Aramis, that Athos, that wise gentleman, should not discover our retreat; then, faith, it will be time to act."

"Yes, more especially as it is not very disagreeable here, with one exception."

"What?"

"Did you observe, D'Artagnan, that three days running they have brought us braised mutton?"

"No; but if that occurs a fourth time I shall complain of it, so never mind."

"And then I feel the loss of my house; 'tis a long time since I visited my castles."

"Forget them for a time; we shall return to them, unless Mazarin razes them to the ground."

"Do you think that likely?"

"No—the other cardinal would have done so: but this one is too low a fellow to risk it."

"You console me, D'Artagnan."

The two prisoners were at this point of their conversation when Comminges entered, preceded by a sergeant and by two men, who brought supper in a basket with two handles, filled with basins and plates.

"What?" exclaimed Porthos, "mutton again?"

"My dear Mon-rieur de Comminges," said D'Artagnan, "you will find my friend, De Valon, will go to the most fatal lengths if Monsieur Mazarin continues to provide us with this sort of meat; mutton every day."

"I declare," said Porthos, "I shall eat nothing if they do not take it away."

"Take away the mutton," said Comminges; "I wish Monsieur de Valon to sup well, more especially as I have news to give him which will improve his appetite."

"Is Mazarin put to death?" asked Porthos.

"No; I am sorry to tell you he is perfectly well."

"So much the worse," said Porthos.

"Should you be very glad to hear that the Count de la Fère was well?" asked De Comminges.

D'Artagnan's small eyes were opened to the utmost.

"Glad!" he cried; "I should be more than glad! Happy!—beyond measure!"

"Well, I am desired by him to give you his compliments, and to say that he is in good health."

"Then you have seen him?"

"Certainly, I have."

"Where—if it is not impertinent."

"Near here," replied De Comminges, smiling; "so near that if the windows which look on the orangery were not stopped up you might see the place where he is."

"He is wandering about the environs of the castle," thought D'Artagnan. Then he said aloud:

"You met him, I dare say, in the park—hunting, perhaps?"

"No; nearer, nearer still. Look behind this wall," said De Comminges, knocking against the wall.

"Behind this wall? What is there, then, behind this wall? I was brought here by night, so devil take me if I know where I am. The count is then in the château?"

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"The same as yourself."

"Athos is, then, a prisoner?"

"You know well," said De Comminges, "that there are no prisoners at Rueil, because there is no prison."

"Don't let us play upon words, sir. Athos has been arrested?"

"Yesterday, at St. Germain, as he came out from the presence of the queen."

"The arms of D'Artagnan fell powerless by his side. One might have supposed him thunderstruck; a paleness ran like a cloud over his dark skin, but disappeared immediately.

"A prisoner?" he reiterated.

"A prisoner," repeated Porthos, quite dejected.

Suddenly D'Artagnan looked up, and in his eyes there was a gleam which scarcely even Porthos observed; but it died away, and he remained more sorrowful than before.

"Come, come," said Comminges, who, since D'Artagnan, on the day of Broussel's arrest, had saved him from the hands of the Parisians, had entertained a real affection for him; "don't be unhappy, I never thought of bringing you bad news. Laugh at the mischance which has befallen your friend and Monsieur de Valon, instead of being in the depths of despair about it."

But D'Artagnan was still in a desponding mood.

"And how did he look?" asked Porthos, who, perceiving that D'Artagnan had allowed the conversation to drop, profited by it to put in his word.

"Very well, indeed, sir," replied Comminges; "at first, like you, he seemed distressed; but when he heard that the cardinal was going to pay him a visit this very evening——"

"Ah!" cried D'Artagnan; "the cardinal going to visit the Count de la Fère?"

"Yes; and the count desired me to tell you that he should take advantage of this visit to plead for you and for himself."

"Ah! the dear count!" said D'Artagnan.

"A fine thing, indeed!" grunted Porthos. "A great favor! Zounds! Monsieur the Count de la Fère, whose family is allied to the Montmorency and the Rohan, is well worthy of Monsieur Mazarin's civilities."

"Never mind!" said D'Artagnan, in his calmest tone, and looking, but in vain, at Porthos, to see if he comprehended all the importance of this visit. "'Tis then Monsieur Mazarin's custom to walk in his orangery?" he added.

"He shuts himself up there every evening, and there, 'tis said, ponders over state affairs."

"Let the cardinal take care of going alone to visit the Count de la Fère," said D'Artagnan; "for the count must be furious."

Comminges began to laugh. "Really, to hear you talk, one would suppose you were cannibals. The count is an affable man; besides, he is unarmed; at the first word from his eminence the two soldiers about him would run to him."

"Now," said D'Artagnan; "I've one last favor to ask of you, Monsieur de Comminges."

"At your service, sir."

"You will see the count again?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Will you remember us to him, and ask him to solicit one favor for me—that his eminence should do me the honor to give me a hearing: that is all I want."

"Oh!" muttered Porthos, shaking his head; "never should I have thought this of *him*! How misfortune humbles a man!"

"That shall be done," answered De Comminges.

"Tell the count that I am well; that you found me sad, but resigned."

"I am pleased, sir, to hear that."

"And the same also for Monsieur de Valon——"

"Not for me!" cried Porthos; "I am not at all resigned."

"He will be so, monsieur; I know him better than he knows himself. Be silent, dear De Valon, and resign yourself."

"Adieu, gentlemen," said De Comminges; "sleep well!"

"We will try."

De Comminges went away, D'Artagnan remaining apparently in the same attitude of humble resignation; but scarcely had he departed than he turned, and clasped Porthos in his arms, with an expression not to be doubted.

"Oh!" cried Porthos; "what's the matter now? Are you mad, my dear friend?"

"What's the matter?" returned D'Artagnan; "we are saved!"

"I don't see that at all," answered Porthos. "I think we are all taken prisoners, except Aramis, and that our chances of going out are lessened since we were entangled in Mazarin's witchcraft."

"Which is far too strong for two of us, but not strong enough for three of us," returned D'Artagnan.

"I don't understand," said Porthos.

"Never mind; let's sit down to table, and take something to strengthen us for the night."

"What are we to do, then, to-night?"

"To travel—perhaps."

"But——"

"Sit down, dear friend, to table. While we are eating, ideas flow easily. After supper, when they are perfected, I will communicate my plans to you."

So Porthos sat down to table without another word, and ate with an appetite that did honor to the confidence which D'Artagnan's imagination had inspired him with.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

STRENGTH AND SAGACITY—CONTINUED.

SUPPER was eaten in silence, but not in sadness; for from time to time one of those sweet smiles which were habitual to him in his moments of good-humor illumined the face of D'Artagnan. Not one of these smiles was lost on Porthos; and at every one he uttered an exclamation which betrayed to his friend that he had not lost sight of the idea which possessed his brain.

At dessert D'Artagnan reposed in his chair, crossed one leg over another, and lounged about like a man perfectly at his ease.

"Well?" he said, at last.

"Well," repeated Porthos.

"You were saying, my dear friend——"

"No; I said nothing."

"Well, you were saying you wished to leave this place."

"Ah, indeed! will is not wanting."

"To go away hence you would not mind, you added, knocking down a door or a wall."

"'Tis true, I said so, and I say it again."

"At what o'clock did we see, pray, the two Swiss guards walk last night?"

"An hour after sunset."

"If they go out to-day, as they did yesterday, we shall have the honor, then, of seeing them in half an hour?"

"In a quarter of an hour, at most."

"Your arm is still strong enough, is it not, Porthos?"

Porthos unbuttoned his sleeve, raised his shirt, and looked complacently on his strong arm, as large as the leg of an ordinary man.

"Yes, indeed," he said, "pretty good."



The Gascon then drew his sword, and marched as an avant-guard

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"So that you could, without trouble, convert these tongs into a hoop, and the shovel into a corkscrew?"

"Certainly." And the giant took up these two articles, and, without any apparent effort, produced in them the metamorphosis requested by his companion.

"There!" he cried.

"Capital!" exclaimed the Gascon. "Really, Porthos, you are a gifted individual!"

"I have heard speak," said Porthos, "of a certain Milo of Crete, who performed wonderful feats, such as binding his forehead with a cord and bursting it—of killing an ox with a blow of his fist, and carrying it home on his shoulders, etc. I used to learn all these feats by heart yonder, down at Pierrefonds, and I have done all that he did except breaking a cord by the swelling of my temples."

"Because your strength is not in your head, Porthos," said his friend.

"No; it is in my arms and shoulders," answered Porthos, with *naïveté*.

"Well, my dear friend, let us go near the window, and try your strength in severing an iron bar."

Porthos approached the window, took a bar in his hands, clung to it, and bent it like a bow; so that the two ends came out of the socket of stone in which for thirty years they had been fixed.

"Well, friend—the cardinal, although such a genius, could never have done that."

"Shall I take out any more of them?" asked Porthos.

"No; that is sufficient; a man can pass through that."

Porthos tried, and passed the trunk of his body through.

"Yes," he said.

"Now pass your arm through this opening."

"Why?"

"You will know presently—pass it."

"I wish to know, however, that I may understand," said Porthos.

"You will know directly; see, the door of the guard-room opens. They are going to send into the court the two guards who accompany Monsieur Mazarin when he crosses into the orangery. See, they are coming out, and have closed the door of the guard-room after them."

In fact, the two soldiers advanced on the side where the window was, rubbing their hands, for it was cold, it being the month of February.

At this moment the door of the guard-house was opened, and one of the soldiers was summoned away.

"Now," said D'Artagnan, "I am going to call this soldier and talk to him. Don't lose a word of what I am going to say to you, Porthos. Everything is in the execution."

"Good; the execution of a plot is my forte."

"I know it well. I depend on you. Look, I shall turn to the left; so that the soldier will be at your right, as soon as he mounts on the bench to talk to us."

"But supposing he doesn't mount?"

"He will; rely on it. As soon as you see him get up, stretch out your arm and seize him by his neck. Then, raising him up as Tobit raised the fish by the gills, you must pull him into your room, taking care to squeeze so tight that he can't cry out."

"Oh!" said Porthos. "Suppose I were to strangle him?"

"To be sure there would only be a Swiss the less in the world; but you will not do so, I hope. Lay him down here; we'll gag him, and tie him—no matter where—somewhere. So we shall get from him one uniform and a sword."

"Marvelous!" exclaimed Porthos; looking at the Gascon with the most profound admiration.

"Pooh!" replied D'Artagnan.

"Yes," said Porthos, recollecting himself, "but one uniform and one sword are not enough for two."

"Well; but there's his comrade?"

"True," said Porthos.

"Therefore, when I cough, stretch out your arm."

"Good!"

The two friends then placed themselves as they had agreed; Porthos being completely hidden in an angle of the window.

"Good-evening, comrade," said D'Artagnan, in his most fascinating voice and manner.

"Good-evening, sir," answered the soldier, in a strong provincial accent.

"'Tis not too warm to walk," resumed D'Artagnan.

"No, sir."

"And I think a glass of wine will not be disagreeable to you?"

"A glass of wine will be very welcome."

"The fish bites! the fish bites!" whispered the Gascon to Porthos.

"I understand," said Porthos.

"A bottle, perhaps?"

"A whole bottle? Yes, sir."

"A whole bottle, if you will drink to my health."

"Willingly," answered the soldier.

"Come, then, and take it, friend," said the Gascon.

"With all my heart. How convenient that there's a bench here. Egad! one would think it had been placed here on purpose."

"Get on it; that's it, friend."

And D'Artagnan coughed.

That instant the arm of Porthos fell. His hand of iron grasped, quick as lightning, and firm as a pair of pincers, the soldier's throat. He raised him, almost stifling him as he drew him through the aperture at the risk of flaying him as he pulled him through. He then laid him down on the floor, where D'Artagnan, after giving him just time enough to draw his breath, gagged him with his scarf; and the moment he had done so began to undress him with the promptitude and dexterity of a man who learned his business on the field of battle. Then the soldier, gagged and bound, was carried inside the hearth, the fire of which had been previously extinguished by the two friends.

"Here's a sword and a dress," said Porthos.

"I take them," said D'Artagnan, "for myself. If you want another uniform and sword, you must play the same trick over again. Stop! I see the other soldier issue from the guard-room, and come toward us."

"I think," replied Porthos, "it would be imprudent to attempt the same maneuver again; a failure would be ruinous. No: I will go down, seize the man unawares, and bring him to you ready gagged."

He did as he said. Porthos seized his opportunity—caught the next soldier by his neck, gagged him, and pushed him like a mummy through the bars into the room, and entered after him. Then they undressed him as they had done the first; laid him on their bed, and bound him with the straps which composed the bed—the bedstead being of oak. This operation proved as successful as the first.

"There," said D'Artagnan, "'tis capital! Now let me try on the dress of yonder chap. Porthos, I doubt if you can wear it; but should it be too tight, never mind, you can wear the breastplate, and the hat with the red feathers."

It happened, however, that the second soldier was a Swiss of gigantic proportions, so, except that some of the seams split, his dress fitted Porthos perfectly.

They then dressed themselves.

"'Tis done!" they both exclaimed at once. "As to you, comrades," they said to the men, "nothing will happen to you if you are discreet; but if you stir, you are dead men."

The soldiers were complaisant; they had found the grasp of Porthos rather powerful, and that it was no joke to contend against it.

D'Artagnan then made Porthos aware of his plan of action, which Porthos then only partially comprehended.

"What is to happen?" he asked.

"Follow me," replied D'Artagnan. "The man who lives to see, shall see."

And, slipping through the aperture, he alighted in the court.

Scarcely had the two Frenchmen touched the ground than a door opened, and the voice of the valet-de-chambre called out, "Make ready!"

At the same moment the guard-house was opened, and a voice called out:

"La Bruyère and Du Barthois! March!"

"It seems that I am named La Bruyère," said D'Artagnan.

"And I, Du Barthois," added Porthos.

"Where are you!" asked the valet-de-chambre, whose eyes, dazzled by the light, could not clearly distinguish our heroes in the gloom.

"Here we are," said the Gascon.

"What say you to that, Monsieur de Valon?" he added, in a low tone, to Porthos.

"If it lasts, it is capital," answered Porthos.

These two newly-enlisted soldiers marched gravely after the valet-de-chambre, who opened the door of the vestibule; then another, which seemed to be that of a waiting-room, and showing them two stools:

"Your orders are very simple," he said; "don't allow anybody, except one person, to enter here. Do you hear?—not a single creature! Obey that person completely. On your return you cannot make a mistake. You have only to wait here till I release you."

D'Artagnan was known to this valet-de-chambre, who was no other than Bernouin, and he had, during the last six or eight months, introduced the Gascon a dozen times to the cardinal. The Gascon, therefore, instead of answering, growled out "Ja! Ja!" in the most German and the least Gascon accent possible.

As to Porthos, with whom D'Artagnan had insisted on a perfect silence, and who did not even now begin to comprehend the scheme of his friend, which was to follow Mazarin in his visit to Athos, he was mute. All that he was allowed to say, in case of emergencies, being the proverbial and solemn *Der Teuffel!*

Bernouin went away and shut the door. When Porthos heard the key of the lock turn, he began to be alarmed, lest they should only have exchanged one prison for another.

"Porthos, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "don't distrust Providence! Let me meditate and consider."

"Meditate and consider as much as you like," replied Porthos, who was now quite out of humor at seeing things take this turn.

"We have walked eight paces," whispered D'Artagnan, "and gone up six steps, so hereabouts is the pavilion, called the Pavilion of the Orangery. The Comte de la Fère cannot be far off, only the doors are locked."

"A grand difficulty!" cried Porthos.

"Hush!" said D'Artagnan.

The sound of a light step was heard in the vestibule. The hinges of the door creaked, and a man appeared in the dress of a cavalier, wrapped in a brown cloak, with a lantern in his hand, and a large beaver hat pulled down over his eyes.

Porthos stood with his face against the wall, but he could not render himself invisible; and the man in the cloak said to him, giving him his lantern:

"Light the lamp which hangs from the ceiling."

Then, addressing D'Artagnan—

"You know the watchword?" he said.

"Ja!" replied the Gascon, determined to confine himself to this specimen of the German tongue.

"*Tedesco!*" answered the cavalier; "*va bene.*"

And advancing toward the door opposite to that by which he came in, he opened it and disappeared behind it, shutting it as he went.

"Now," asked Porthos, "what are we to do?"

"Now we shall make use of your shoulder, friend Porthos, if this door should be locked. Everything in its proper time and all comes right to those who know how to wait patiently. But first barricade the first door well, and then we will follow yonder cavalier."

The two friends set to work and crowded the space before the door with all the furniture in the room, so as not only to make the passage impassable, but that the door could not open inward.

"There!" said D'Artagnan, "we can't be overtaken. Come! forward!"

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE OUBLIETTES OF CARDINAL MAZARIN.

AT first, on arriving at the door through which Mazarin had passed, D'Artagnan tried in vain to open it; but on the powerful shoulder of Porthos being applied to one of the panels, which gave way, D'Artagnan introduced the point of his sword between the bolt and the staple of the lock. The bolt gave way and the door opened.

"As I told you, everything can be got, Porthos, by means of women and doors."

"You're a great moralist, and that's the fact," said Porthos.

They entered: behind a glass window, by the light of the cardinal's lantern, which had been placed on the floor in the midst of the gallery, they saw the orange and pomegranate trees of the castle of Rueil, in long lines, forming one great alley and two smaller side alleys.

"No cardinal!" said D'Artagnan, "but only his man; where the devil is he then?"

Exploring, however, one of the side wings of the gallery, he saw all at once, at his left, a tub containing an orange tree, which had been pushed out of its place, and in its place an open aperture. He also perceived in this hold the steps of a winding staircase.

He called Porthos to look at it.

"Had our object been money only," he said, "we should be rich directly."

"How's that?"

"Don't you understand, Porthos? At the bottom of that staircase is, probably, the cardinal's treasury, of which every one speaks so much; and we should only have to descend—empty a chest—shut the cardinal up in it—double-lock it—go away, carrying off as much gold as we could—put this orange tree over the place, and no one would ever ask us where our fortune came from—not even the cardinal."

"It would be a happy hit for clowns to make, but it seems to be unworthy of two gentlemen," said Porthos.

"So I think; and we don't want gold—we want other things," replied the Gascon.

At the same moment, while D'Artagnan was leaning over the aperture to listen, a metallic sound, as if some one was moving a bag of gold, struck on his ear; he started; instantly afterward a door opened, and a light played upon the staircase.

Mazarin had left his lamp in the gallery to make people believe that he was walking about, but he had with him a wax-light to explore with its aid his mysterious strong box.

"'Faith!" he said, in Italian, as he was reascending the steps, and looking at a bag of reals, "'faith, there's enough to pay five councillors of the parliament, and two generals in Paris. I am a great captain—that I am! but I make war in my own way."

The two friends were crouching down, meantime, behind a tub in the side alley.

Mazarin came within three steps of D'Artagnan, and pushing a spring in the wall, the slab on which the orange tree was, turned, and the orange tree resumed its place.

Then the cardinal put out the wax-light, slipped it into his pocket, and taking up the lantern—"Now," he said, "for Monsieur de la Fère."

"Very good," thought D'Artagnan, "'tis our road likewise; we can go together."

All three set off on their walk, Mazarin taking the middle alley and the friends the side one.

The cardinal reached a second door without perceiving that he was followed; the sand by which the alley was covered deadened the sound of footsteps.

He then turned to the left, down a corridor which had escaped the attention of the two friends; but as he opened the door he stopped, as if in thought.

"Ah! Diavolo!" he exclaimed, "I forgot the recommendation of De Comminges, who advised me to take a guard and place it at this door, in order not to put myself at the mercy of that four-headed devil." And, with a movement of impatience, he turned to retrace his steps.

"Do not give yourself the trouble, my lord," said D'Artagnan, with his right foot forward, his beaver in his hand, a smile on his face; "we have followed your eminence step by step, and here we are."

"Yes—here we are," said Porthos.

And he made the same friendly salute as D'Artagnan.

Mazarin gazed at each of them with an affrighted stare, recognized them, and let drop his lantern, uttering a cry of terror.

D'Artagnan picked it up; by good luck it had not been extinguished by the fall.

"Oh! what imprudence, my lord," said D'Artagnan; "'tis not good to go about here without a light. Your eminence might knock against something or fall into some hole."

"Monsieur D'Artagnan!" muttered Mazarin, not able to recover from his astonishment.

"Yes, my lord, it is I—I've the honor of presenting you Monsieur de Valon, that excellent friend of mine, in whom your eminence had the kindness to interest yourself formerly."

And D'Artagnan held the lamp before the merry face of Porthos, who now began to comprehend the affair, and be very proud of the whole undertaking.

"You were going to visit Monsieur de la Fère?" said D'Artagnan. "Don't let us disarrange your eminence. Be so good as to show us the way, and we will follow you."

Mazarin was by degrees recovering his senses.

"Have you been long in the orangery?" he asked in a trembling voice, remembering the visit he had been paying to his treasury.

"We are just come, my lord."

Mazarin breathed again. His fears were now no longer for his hoards, but for himself. A sort of smile played on his lips.

"Come," he said, "you have taken me in a snare, gentlemen. I confess myself conquered. You wish to ask for your liberty, and I give it you."

"Oh, my lord!" answered D'Artagnan, "you are very good; as to our liberty, we have that; we want to ask something else of you."

"You have your liberty?" repeated Mazarin, in terror.

"Certainly; and on the other hand, my lord, you have lost it; and now 'tis the law of war, sir, you must buy it back again."

Mazarin felt a shiver all over him, a chill even to his heart's core. His piercing look was fixed in vain on the satirical face of the Gascon and on the unchanging countenance of Porthos. Both were in shadow, and even a sybil could not have read them.

"To purchase back my liberty?" said the cardinal.

"Yes, my lord."

"And how much will that cost me, Monsieur D'Artagnan?"

"Zounds, my lord, I don't know yet. We must ask the Count de la Fère the question. Will your eminence deign to open the door which leads to the count's room, and in ten minutes it will be settled."

Mazarin started.

"My lord," said D'Artagnan, "your eminence sees that we wish to act with all due forms of respect; but I must warn you that we have no time to lose; open the door, then, my

lord, and be so good as to remember, once for all, that on the slightest attempt to escape or the least cry for help, our position being a very critical one, you must not be angry with us if we go to extremities."

"Be assured," answered Mazarin, "that I shall attempt nothing; I give you my word of honor."

D'Artagnan made a sign to Porthos to redouble his watchfulness; then turning to Mazarin:

"Now, my lord, let us enter, if you please."

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

CONFERENCES.

MAZARIN turned the lock of a double door, on the threshold of which they found Athos ready to receive his illustrious guest; on seeing his friends he started with surprise.

"D'Artagnan! Porthos!" he exclaimed.

"My very self, dear friend."

"Me also," repeated Porthos.

"What means this?" asked the count.

"It means," replied Mazarin, trying to smile, and biting his lips in smiling, "that our parts are changed, and that instead of these gentlemen being my prisoners, I am theirs; but, gentlemen, I warn ye, unless you kill me, your victory will be of short duration—people will come to the rescue."

"Ah! my lord," cried the Gascon, "don't threaten! 'tis a bad example. We are so good and gentle to your eminence. Come, let us put aside all rancor and talk pleasantly."

"There's nothing I wish more," replied Mazarin. "But don't think yourselves in a better position than you are. In ensnaring me you have fallen into the trap yourselves. How are you to get away from here? Remember the soldiers and sentinels who guard these doors. Now I am going to show to you how sincere I am."

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan; "we must look about us; he's going to play us a trick."

"I offered you your liberty," continued the minister; "will you take it? Before an hour will have passed you will be discovered, arrested, obliged to kill me, which would be a crime unworthy of loyal gentlemen like you."

"He is right," thought Athos.

And, like every other reflection passing in a mind that en-

tertained none but noble thoughts, this feeling was expressed in his eyes.

"We shall not," answered D'Artagnan, "have recourse to violence, except in the last extremity" (for he saw that Athos seemed to lean toward Mazarin).

"If, on the contrary," resumed Mazarin, "you accept your liberty——"

"Why you, my lord, might take it away from us five minutes afterward; and from my knowledge of you, I believe you will take it away from us."

"No—on the faith of a cardinal. You do not believe me?"

"My lord, I never believe cardinals who are not priests."

"Well, on the faith of a minister."

"You are no longer a minister, my lord; you are a prisoner."

"Then, on the honor of a Mazarin, as I am, and ever shall be, I hope," said the cardinal.

"Hem!" replied D'Artagnan. "I have heard speak of a Mazarin who had little religion when his oaths were in question. I fear he may have been an ancestor of your eminence."

"Monsieur D'Artagnan, you are a great wit, and I'm quite sorry to be on bad terms with you."

"My lord, let us make it up; one resource always remains to us."

"What?"

"That of dying together."

Mazarin shuddered.

"Listen," he said; "at the end of yonder corridor is a door of which I have the key; it leads into the park. Go, and take this key with you; you are active, vigorous, and you have arms. At a hundred steps, to the left, you will find the wall of the park; get over it, and in three jumps you will be on the road, and free."

"Ah! by Jove, my lord," said D'Artagnan, "you have well said, but these are only words. Where is the key you spoke of?"

"Here it is."

"Ah, my lord! You will conduct us yourself, then, to that door?"

"Very willingly, if it be necessary to reassure you," answered the minister; and Mazarin, who was delighted to get off so sheaply, led the way, in high spirits, to the corridor, and opened the door.

It led into the park, as the three fugitives perceived by the night breeze which rushed into the corridor, and blew the wind into their faces.

"The devil!" exclaimed the Gascon. "'Tis a dreadful night, my lord. We don't know the localities, and shall never find the wall. Since your eminence has come so far, a few steps farther conduct us, my lord, to the wall."

"Be it so," replied the cardinal; and walking at a straight line he walked to the wall, at the foot of which they all four arrived at the same instant.

"Are you satisfied, gentlemen?" asked Mazarin.

"I think so, indeed; we should be hard to please if we were not. Deuce take it! three poor gentlemen escorted by a prince of the church! Ah! apropos, my lord! you remarked that we were all vigorous, active, and armed."

"Yes."

"You are mistaken. Monsieur de Valon and I are the only two who are armed. The count is not; and should we meet with any patrol, we must defend ourselves."

"'Tis true."

"Where can we find a sword?" asked Porthos.

"My lord," said D'Artagnan, "will lend his—which is no use to him—to the Count de la Fère."

"Willingly," said the cardinal; "I will even ask the count to keep it for my sake."

"I promise you, my lord, never to part with it," replied Athos.

"Well," remarked D'Artagnan, "this change of measures, how touching it is! have you not tears in your eyes, Porthos?"

"Yes," said Porthos; "but I do not know if it is that or the wind that makes me weep; I think it is the wind."

"Now climb up, Athos, quickly," said D'Artagnan. Athos, assisted by Porthos, who lifted him up like a feather, arrived at the top.

"Now jump down, Athos."

Athos jumped and disappeared on the other side of the wall.

"Porthos, while I get up, watch the cardinal. No, I don't want your help. Watch the cardinal. Lend me your back—but don't let the cardinal go."

Porthos lent him his back, and D'Artagnan was soon on the summit of the wall, where he seated himself.

"Now, what?" asked Porthos.

"Now give me the cardinal up here; if he makes any noise stifle him."

Mazarin wished to call out, but Porthos held him tight, and passed him to D'Artagnan, who seized him by the neck and made him sit down by him: then, in a menacing tone, he said:

"Sir! jump directly down, close to Monsieur de la Fère, or, on the honor of a gentleman, I'll kill you!"

"*Monson, Monson,*" cried Mazarin, "you are breaking your word to me!"

"I—did I promise you anything, my lord?"

Mazarin groaned.

"You are free," he said, "through me; your liberty was my ransom."

"Agreed; but the ransom of that immense treasure buried under the gallery—must not one speak of that a little, my lord?"

"Diavolo!" cried Mazarin, almost choked, and clasping his hands; "I am a ruined man!"

But, without listening to his grief, D'Artagnan slipped him gently down into the arms of Athos, who stood immovable at the bottom of the wall.

Porthos next made an effort, which shook the wall; and by the aid of his friend's hand, gained the summit.

"I did not understand at all," he said, "but I understand now; how droll it is!"

"You think so? so much the better; but, that it may be droll even to the end, let us not lose time." And he jumped off the wall.

Porthos did the same.

The Gascon then drew his sword, and marched as an avant-guard.

"My lord, which way do we go? think well of your reply; for should your eminence be mistaken, there might be very grave results for all of us."

"Along the wall, sir," said Mazarin, "there will be no danger of losing yourselves."

The three friends hastened on, but in a short time were obliged to slacken their pace. The cardinal could not keep up with them, though with every wish to do so.

Suddenly D'Artagnan touched something warm, and which moved.

"Stop! A horse!" he cried; "I have found a horse!"

"And I likewise," said Athos.

"I too," said Porthos, who, faithful to the instructions, still held the cardinal's arm.

"There's luck, my lord! just as you were complaining of being tired, and obliged to walk."

But, as he spoke, a pistol ball fell near his feet, and these words were pronounced:

"Touch it not!"

"Grimaud!" he cried, "Grimaud! what art thou about! wert thou sent by heaven?"

"No, sir," said the honest servant; "it was Monsieur Aramis who told me to take care of the horses."

"Is Aramis here?"

"Yes, sir; he has been here since yesterday."

"What are you doing?"

"On the watch——"

"What! Aramis here?" cried Athos.

"At the lesser gate of the castle; he's posted there."

"Are you a large party?"

"Sixty."

"Let him know."

"This moment, sir."

And, believing that no one could execute the commission better than he could, Grimaud set forth at full speed; while, enchanted at being all together again, the three friends awaited his return.

There was no one in the whole group in ill humor except Cardinal Mazarin.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

IN WHICH WE BEGIN TO THINK THAT PORTHOS WILL BE
AT LAST A BARON AND D'ARTAGNAN A CAPTAIN.

AT THE expiration of ten minutes Aramis arrived, accompanied by Grimaud, and eight or ten followers. He was much delighted, and threw himself into his friends' arms.

"You are then free, brothers! free without my aid!"

"Do not be unhappy, dear friend, on that account; if you have done nothing as yet, you will do something," replied Athos.

"I had well concerted my plans," pursued Aramis; "the coadjutor gave me sixty men; twenty guard the walls of the park, twenty the road from Rueil to St. Germain, twenty are dispersed in the woods. I lay in ambuscade with my sixty men; I encircled the castle; the riding horses I entrusted to Grimaud, and I awaited your coming out, which I did not expect till to-morrow, and I hoped to free you without a skirmish. You are free to-night, without fighting; so much the better! how could you escape that scoundrel, Mazarin?"

"'Tis thanks to him," said D'Artagnan, "that we made our escape, and——"

"Impossible!"

"Yes, indeed, 'tis owing to him that we are at liberty."

"Well!" exclaimed Aramis, "this will reconcile me to him; but I wish he were here that I might tell him that I did not believe him to be capable of so noble an act."

"My lord," said D'Artagnan, no longer able to contain himself, "allow me to introduce to you the Chevalier d'Herblay, who wishes—as you may have heard—to offer his congratulations to your eminence."

And he retired, discovering Mazarin—who was in great confusion—to the astonished gaze of Aramis.

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed the latter, "the cardinal! a fine prize! halloo! halloo! friends! to horse! to horse!"

Several horsemen quickly ran to him.

"Zounds!" cried Aramis, "I may have done some good, then; my lord, deign to receive my most respectful homage! I will lay a wager that 'tis that Saint Christopher, Porthos, who performed this feat! Apropos! I forgot——" and he gave some orders in a low voice to one of the horsemen.

"I think it will be wise to set off," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes; but I am expecting some one—a friend of Athos."

"A friend!" exclaimed the count.

"And here he is, galloping away through the bushes."

"The count! the count!" cried a young voice, which made Athos start.

"Raoul! Raoul!" he ejaculated.

For one moment the young man forgot his habitual respect—he threw himself on his father's neck.

"Look, my lord cardinal," said Aramis, "would it not have been a pity to have separated those who love each other as we love? Gentlemen," he continued, addressing the cavaliers, who became more and more numerous every instant, "gentlemen, encircle his eminence, that you may show him the greater honor. He will, indeed, give us the favor of his company; you will, I hope, be grateful for it. Porthos, do not lose sight of his eminence."

Aramis then joined Athos and D'Artagnan, who were consulting together.

"Come," said D'Artagnan, after a conference of five minutes' duration, "let us begin our journey."

"Where are we to go?" asked Porthos.

"To your house, dear Porthos, at Pierrefonds; your fine château is worthy of affording a princely hospitality to his

eminence; it is also well situated; neither too near Paris, nor too far from it. We can establish a communication between it and the capital with great facility. Come, my lord, you shall there be treated like a prince, as you are."

"A fallen prince," exclaimed Mazarin, piteously.

"The chances of war," said Athos, "are many; but be assured we shall not take an improper advantage of them."

"No; but we shall make use of them," interposed D'Artagnan.

The rest of the night was employed by these cavaliers in traveling, with the wonderful rapidity of former days. Mazarin, continuing somber and pensive, permitted himself to be dragged along in this way, which was like a race of phantoms. At dawn twelve leagues had been passed, without stopping; half the escort were exhausted, and several horses fell down.

"Horses nowadays are not what they were formerly," observed Porthos; "everything degenerates."

In about ten minutes the escort stopped at Ermenonville, but the four friends went on with fresh ardor, guarding Mazarin carefully. At noon they rode into the avenue of Pierrefonds.

"We are four of us," said D'Artagnan; "we must relieve each other in mounting guard over my lord, and each of us must watch three hours at a time. Athos is going to examine the castle, which it will be necessary to render impregnable in case of a siege; Porthos will see to the provisions, and Aramis to the troops of the garrison. That is to say, Athos will be chief engineer, Porthos purveyor in general, and Aramis governor of the fortress."

Meanwhile they gave up to Mazarin the handsomest room in the château.

"Gentlemen," he said, when he was in his room, "you do not expect, I presume, to keep me here a long time incognito?"

"No, my lord," replied the Gascon; "on the contrary, we think of announcing very soon that we have you here."

"Then you will be besieged."

"We expect it."

"And what shall you do?"

"Defend ourselves. Were the late Cardinal Richelieu alive, he would tell you a certain story of the Bastion Saint Gervaise, which we four, with our four lackeys and twelve dead men, held out against a whole army."

"Such feats, sir, are done once, and are never repeated."

"However, nowadays there's not need of so much hero-

ism. To-morrow the army of Paris will be summoned—the day after it will be here! The field of battle, instead, therefore, of being at St. Denis, or at Charenton, will be near Compiègne, or Villars-Cotterets.”

“The prince will beat you, as he has always done.”

“’Tis possible, my lord; but before an engagement we shall move away your eminence to another castle belonging to our friend De Valon, who has three. We will not expose your eminence to the chances of war.”

“Come,” answered Mazarin. “I see it will be necessary for you to capitulate.”

“Before a siege?”

“Yes; the conditions will be better than afterward.”

“Ah, my lord! as to conditions, you would soon see how moderate and reasonable we are.”

“Come, now, pray what are your conditions? I wish to know whether I am among enemies or friends.”

“Friends, my lord! friends!”

“Well, then, tell me at once what you want, that I may see if an arrangement be possible. Speak, Count de la Fère!”

“My lord,” replied Athos, “for myself I have nothing to ask; for France, were I to specify, I should have too much. I beg you excuse me, and propose to the chevalier.”

And Athos, bowing, retired and remained leaning against the mantelpiece, merely as a spectator of the scene.

“Speak, then, chevalier!” said the cardinal. “What do you want? Nothing ambiguous, if you please. Be clear, short and precise.”

“As for me,” replied Aramis, “I have in my pocket that programme of the conditions which the deputation—of which I formed one—went yesterday to St. Germain to impose on you. Let us consider the debts and claims the first. The demands in that programme must be granted.”

“We were almost agreed as to those,” replied Mazarin; “let us pass on to private and personal stipulations.”

“You suppose, then, that there will be some?” asked Aramis, smiling.

“I do not suppose that you will all be so disinterested as Monsieur de la Fère,” replied the cardinal, bowing to Athos.

“My lord! you are right! The count has a mind far above vulgar desires and human passions! He is a proud soul—he is a man by himself! You are right—he is worth us all—and we avow it to you!”

“Aramis!” said Athos, “are you jesting?”

“No, no, dear friend; I state only what we all know.

You are right; it is not you alone this matter concerns, but my lord, and his unworthy servant, myself."

"Well, then, what do you require besides the general conditions before recited?"

"I require, my lord, that Normandy should be given to Madame de Longueville, with five hundred thousand francs, and full absolution. I require that his majesty should deign to be godfather to the child she has just borne: and that my lord, after having been present at the christening, should go to proffer his homage to our Holy Father the Pope."

"That is, that you wish me to lay aside my ministerial functions, to quit France, and be an exile."

"I wish his eminence to become Pope on the first opportunity, allowing me then the right of demanding full indulgences, for myself and my friends."

Mazarin made a grimace which was quite indescribable, and turned to D'Artagnan—

"And you, sir?" he said.

"I, my lord," answered the Gascon, "I differ from Monsieur D'Herblay totally in the last point, though I agree with him in the first. Far from wishing my lord to quit Paris, I hope he will stay there and continue to be Prime Minister, as he is a great statesman. I shall try, also, to help him to put down the Fronde; but on one condition—that he sometimes remembers the king's faithful servants, and gives the first vacant company of musketeers to some one I can mention to him. And you, Monsieur de Valon——"

"Yes, you, sir! Speak, if you please," said Mazarin.

"As to me," answered Porthos, "I wish my lord cardinal—to do honor to my house, which has given him an asylum—would, in remembrance of this adventure, erect my estate into a barony, with a promise to confer that order on one of my friends, whenever his majesty next creates peers."

Mazarin bit his lip.

"All that," he said, "appears to me to be ill-connected, gentlemen; for if I satisfy some I shall displease others. If I stay in Paris, I cannot go to Rome; and if I become Pope I could not continue to be Prime Minister; and it is only by continuing Prime Minister that I can make Monsieur D'Artagnan a captain, and Monsieur de Valon a baron."

"True," said Aramis; "so, as I am in my minority, I give up my proposal."

"Well, then, gentlemen, take care of your own concerns, and let France settle matters as she will with me," resumed Mazarin.

"Ho! ho!" replied Aramis. "The Frondeurs will have a treaty, and your eminence must sign it before us, promising, at the same time, to obtain the queen's consent to it—here is the treaty—may it please your eminence, read and sign it."

"I know it," answered Mazarin.

"Then sign it."

"But, suppose I refuse?"

"Then," said D'Artagnan, "your eminence must expect the consequences of a refusal."

"Would you dare to touch a cardinal?"

"You have dared, my lord, to imprison her majesty's musketeers."

"The queen will revenge me, gentlemen."

"I do not think so, although inclination might lead her to do so, but we shall take your eminence to Paris—and the Parisians will defend us; therefore, sign this treaty, I beg of you."

"Suppose the queen should refuse to ratify it?"

"Ah! nonsense!" cried D'Artagnan, "I can manage so that her majesty will receive me well; I know one method."

"What?"

"I shall take her majesty the letter in which you tell her that the finances are exhausted."

"And then?" asked Mazarin, turning pale.

"When I see her majesty embarrassed, I shall conduct her to Rueil, make her enter the orangery, and show her a certain spring which turns a box."

"Enough, sir," muttered the cardinal, "you have said enough—where is the treaty?"

"Here it is," replied Aramis. "Sign, my lord," and he gave him a pen.

Mazarin arose—walked some moments, thoughtful, but not dejected.

"And when I have signed," he said, "what is to be my guarantee?"

"My word of honor, sir," said Athos.

Mazarin started—turned toward the Count de la Fère—and, looking for an instant at his noble and honest countenance, took the pen.

"It is sufficient, count," he said, and he signed the treaty.

"And now, Monsieur d'Artagnan," he said, "prepare to set off for Saint Germain, and to leave a letter from me to the queen."

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

SHOWS HOW WITH A THREAT AND A PEN MORE IS EFFECTED
THAN BY THE SWORD.

D'ARTAGNAN knew his part well; he was aware that opportunity has a forelock only for him who will take it, and he was not a man to let it go by him without seizing it. He soon arranged a prompt and certain manner of traveling, by sending relays of horses to Chantilly, so that he could be in Paris in five or six hours.

Nothing was known at St. Germain's about Mazarin's disappearance, except by the queen, who concealed, to her friends even, her uneasiness. She had heard all about the two soldiers who were found, bound and gagged. Bernouin, who knew more about the affair than anybody, had, in fact, gone to acquaint the queen of the circumstances which had occurred. Anne had enforced the utmost secrecy, and had disclosed the event to no one except the Prince de Condé, who had sent five or six horsemen into the environs of St. Germain's, with orders to bring any suspicious person who was going away from Rueil, in whatsoever direction it might be.

On entering the court of the palace, D'Artagnan encountered Bernouin, to whose instrumentality he owed a prompt introduction to the queen's presence. He approached the sovereign with every mark of profound respect, and having fallen on his knees, presented to her the cardinal's letter.

It was, however, merely a letter of introduction. The queen read it, recognized the writing, and, since there were no details in it of what had occurred, asked for particulars. D'Artagnan related everything, with that simple and ingenuous air which he knew how to assume on some occasions. The queen, as he went on, looked at him with increasing astonishment. She could not comprehend how a man could conceive such an enterprise, and still less how he could have the audacity to disclose it to her whose interest, and almost duty, it was to punish him.

"How, sir!" she cried, as D'Artagnan finished, "you dare to tell me the details of your crime—to give me an account of your treason!"

"Your majesty, on your side," said D'Artagnan, "is as much mistaken as to our intentions as the Cardinal Mazarin has always been."

"You are in error, sir," answered the queen. "I am so

little mistaken, that in ten minutes you shall be arrested, and in an hour I shall set off to release my minister."

"I am sure your majesty will not commit such an act of imprudence; first, because it would be useless, and would produce the most serious results. Before he could be set free, the cardinal would be dead; and, indeed, so convinced is he of this, that he entreated me, should I find your majesty disposed to act in this way, to do all I could to induce you to change your intentions."

"Well, then! I shall be content with only arresting you!"

"Madame, the possibility of my arrest has been foreseen, and should I not have returned to-morrow, at a certain hour the next day the cardinal will be brought to Paris, and delivered up to the parliament."

"I think," returned Anne of Austria, fixing upon him a glance which, in any woman's face, would have expressed disdain, but in a queen's, spread terror to those she looked upon—"I perceive that you dare to threaten the mother of your sovereign."

"Madame," replied D'Artagnan, "I threaten only because I am forced to do so. Believe me, madame, as true a thing as it is that a heart beats in this bosom—a heart devoted to you—believe that you have been the idol of our lives; that we have—as you well know—good heaven! risked our lives twenty times for your majesty. Have you then, madame, no compassion on your people, who love you, and yet who suffer—who love you, and who are yet famished—who have no other wish than to bless you, and who, nevertheless—no, I am wrong, your subjects, madame, will never curse you! Say one word to them! and all will be ended; peace succeeds to war, joy to tears, happiness to misfortune!"

Anne of Austria looked with wonderment on the warlike countenance of D'Artagnan, which betrayed a singular expression of deep feeling.

"Why did you not say all this before you acted?" she said.

"Because, madame, it was necessary to prove to your majesty one thing of which you doubted, that is, that we still possess among us some valor, and are worthy of some consideration at your hands."

"Then, in case of my refusal, this valor, should a struggle occur, will go even to the length of carrying me off in the midst of my court, to deliver me into the hands of the Fronde, as you have done my minister?"

"We have not thought about it, madame," answered D'Artagnan, with that Gascon effrontery which had in him the

appearance of *naïveté*; "but if we four had so settled it, we should certainly have done so."

"I ought," muttered Anne to herself, "by this time to remember that these are men of iron mold."

"Alas! madame!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "this proves to me that it is only since yesterday that your majesty has imbibed a true opinion of us. Your majesty will do us justice. In doing us justice you will no longer treat us as men of ordinary stamp. You will see in me an ambassador worthy of the high interests which he is authorized to discuss with his sovereign."

"Where is the treaty?"

"Here it is."

Anne of Austria cast her eyes upon the treaty that D'Artagnan presented to her.

"I do not see here," she said, "anything but general conditions; the interests of the Prince de Conti, or of the Ducs de Beaufort, De Bouillon, and D'Elbeuf, and of the coadjutor, are herein consulted; but with regard to yours."

"We do ourselves justice, madame, even in assuming the high position that we have. We do not think ourselves worthy to stand near such great names."

"But you, I presume, have decided to assert your pretensions, *viva voce*?"

"I believe you, madame, to be a great and powerful queen, and that it will be unworthy of your power and greatness if you do not recompense the arm which will bring back his eminence to St. Germain."

"It is my intention so to do; come—let us hear—speak."

"He who has negotiated these matters—forgive me if I begin by speaking of myself, but I must take that importance to myself which has been given to me, not assumed by me—he who has arranged matters for the return of the cardinal, ought, it appears to me, in order that his reward may not be unworthy of your majesty, to be made commandant of the guards—an appointment something like that of captain of the musketeers."

"'Tis the appointment that Monsieur de Tréville had, that you ask of me."

"The place, madame, is vacant; and although 'tis a year since Monsieur de Tréville has left it, is not yet filled up."

"But it is one of the principal military appointments in the king's household."

"Monsieur de Tréville was merely a younger son of a Gascon family, like me, madame; he occupied that post for twenty years."

"You have an answer ready for everything," replied the queen, and she took a document, which she filled up and signed, from her bureau.

"Undoubtedly, madame," said D'Artagnan, taking the document and bowing, "this is a noble reward; but everything in this world is unstable; and any man who happened to fall into disgrace with your majesty would lose everything."

"What then do you want?" asked the queen, coloring, as she found that she had to deal with a mind as subtle as her own.

"A hundred thousand francs for this poor captain of musketeers, to be paid whenever his services should no longer be acceptable to your majesty."

Anne hesitated.

"To think of the Parisians," resumed D'Artagnan, "offering the other day, by an edict of the parliament, six hundred thousand francs to any man soever who would deliver up the cardinal to them, dead or alive—if alive, in order to hang him; if dead, to deny him the rights of Christian burial!——"

"Come," said Anne, "'tis reasonable—since you only ask from a queen the sixth of what the parliament has proposed"—and she signed an order for a hundred thousand francs.

"Now then?" she said, "what next?"

"Madame, my friend De Valon is rich: and has therefore nothing in the way of fortune to desire: but I think I remember that there was a dispute between him and Monsieur Mazarin as to making his estate a barony or not. 'Twas even a promise."

"A country clown," said Anne of Austria; "people will laugh."

"Let them!" answered D'Artagnan; "but I am sure of one thing—that those who laugh at him in his presence will never laugh a second time."

"Here goes the barony," said the queen, and she signed a patent.

"Now there remains the chevalier, or the Abbé d'Herblay, as your majesty pleases."

"Does he wish to be a bishop?"

"No, madame, something easier to grant."

"What?"

"It is that the king should deign to stand godfather to the son of Madame de Longueville."

The queen smiled.

"Nothing more?" she asked.

"No, madame, for I presume that the king, standing god-father to him, could do no less than present him with five hundred thousand francs, giving his father, also, the government of Normandy."

"As to the government of Normandy," replied the queen, "I think I can promise; but, with regard to the present, the cardinal is always telling me there is no more money in the royal coffers."

"We shall search for some, madame, and I think we can find some, and if your majesty permits, we will seek for some together."

"What next?"

"Madame, the Count de la Fère."

"What does he ask?"

"Nothing."

"There is in the world, then, one man who, having the power to ask—asks for nothing."

"The Count de la Fère, madame, is more than a man; he is a demi-god."

"Are you satisfied, sir?"

"There is one thing which the queen has not signed—her consent to the treaty."

"Of what use to-day? I will sign to-morrow."

"I can assure her majesty that if she does not sign to-day, she will not have time to sign to-morrow. Consent, then, I beg you, madame, to write at the bottom of this schedule, which has been drawn up by Mazarin, as you see."

"I consent to ratify the treaty proposed by the Parisians."

Anne was ensnared; she could not draw back—she signed; but scarcely had she done so when pride burst forth in her like a tempest, and she began to weep.

D'Artagnan started on seeing these tears: since that time queens have shed tears like other women.

The Gascon shook his head: these tears from royalty melted his heart.

"Madame," he said, kneeling, "look upon the unhappy man at your feet. Behold, madame! here are the august signatures of your majesty's hand: if you think you are right in giving them to me, you shall do so—but, from this very moment, you are free from any obligation to keep them."

And D'Artagnan, full of honest pride and of manly intrepidity, placed in Anne's hands, in a bundle, the papers that he had, one by one, won from her with so much difficulty.

There are moments—for if everything is not good, everything in this world is not bad—in which the most rigid and

the coldest hearts are softened by the tears of strong emotion—of a generous sentiment; one of these momentary impulses actuated Anne. D'Artagnan, when he gave way to his own feelings—which were in accordance with those of the queen—had accomplished all that the most skillful diplomacy could have done. He was, therefore, instantly recompensed, either for his address, or for his sensibility, whichever it might be termed.

“You are right, sir,” said Anne. “I misunderstood you. There are the acts signed: I deliver them to you without compulsion: go and bring me back the cardinal as soon as possible.”

“Madame,” faltered D'Artagnan, “it is twenty years ago—I have a good memory—since I had the honor, behind a piece of tapestry in the Hotel de Ville, to kiss one of those beautiful hands.”

“There is the other,” replied the queen; and that the left hand should not be less liberal than the right, she drew from her fingers a diamond—nearly similar to the one formerly given to him—“take and keep this ring in remembrance of me.”

“Madame,” said D'Artagnan, rising, “I have only one thing more to wish, which is, that the next thing you ask from me, should be my life.”

And with this way of concluding—a way peculiar to himself—he arose and left the room.

“I have never rightly understood these men,” said the queen, as she watched him retiring from her presence; “and it is now too late—for in a year the king will be of age.”

In twenty-four hours D'Artagnan and Porthos conducted Mazarin to the queen; and the one received his commission, the other his patent of nobility.

On the same day the Treaty of Paris was signed; and it was everywhere announced that the cardinal had shut himself up for three days, in order to draw it out with the greatest care.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN THAT IT IS SOMETIMES MORE DIFFICULT FOR KINGS TO RETURN TO THE CAPITALS OF THEIR KINGDOMS THAN TO GO OUT OF THEM.

WHILE D'Artagnan and Porthos were engaged in conducting the cardinal to St. Germain's, Athos and Aramis returned to Paris.

Each had his own particular visit to make.

Aramis rushed to the Hotel de Ville, where Madame de Longueville was sojourning. The duchess had loudly lamented the announcement of peace. War had made her a queen; peace brought her abdication. She declared that she had never expected the treaty, and that she wished for eternal war.

But Aramis consoled her, and pointed out the solid advantages that were the result of peace—the precarious tenure of all she had prized during war.

“Now,” said Aramis to her, “detach your brother, the Prince of Condé, from the queen, whom he does not like—from Mazarin, whom he despises. The Fronde is a comedy, of which the first act only is played. Let us wait for a denouement—for the day when the prince, thanks to you, shall have turned against the court.”

Madame de Longueville was persuaded of the influence of her fine eyes, and was appeased; but Madame de Chevreuse frowned, and, in spite of all the logic of Athos to show her that a prolonged war would have been impracticable, contended in favor of hostilities.

“My fair friend,” said Athos, “allow me to tell you that everybody is tired of war. You will get yourself exiled, as you did in the time of Louis XIII. Believe me, we have passed the time of success in intrigue, and your beautiful eyes are not destined to be blinded by regretting Paris, where there will always be two queens as long as you are there.”

“Oh,” cried the duchess, “I cannot make war alone, but I can avenge myself on that ungrateful queen and ambitious favorite—on the honor of a duchess, I will avenge myself.”

“Madame,” replied Athos, “do not injure the Vicomte de Bragelonne—do not ruin his prospects. Alas! excuse my weakness! There are moments when a man grows young again in his children.”

The duchess smiled, half tenderly, half ironically.

“Count,” she said, “you are, I fear, gained over to the court. I suppose you have a blue ribbon in your pocket?”

“Yes, madame; I have that of the Garter, which King Charles I. gave me some days before he died.”

“Come! one must grow into an old woman,” said the duchess pensively.

Athos took her hand and kissed it. She sighed as she looked at him.

"Count," she said, "Bragelonne must be a charming place. You are a man of taste. You have water—woods—flowers—there?"

She sighed again, and leaned her charming head, gracefully reclined, on her hand—still beautiful in form and color.

"Madame!" exclaimed Athos, "what were you saying just now about growing old? Never have I seen you look so young—never more beautiful!"

The duchess shook her head.

"Does Monsieur de Bragelonne remain in Paris?" she inquired.

"What think you of it?" answered Athos.

"Leave it to me," replied the duchess; "really, sir, you are delightful, and I should like to spend a month at Bragelonne."

"Are you not afraid of making people envious, duchess?" replied Athos.

"No, I shall go incognito, count, under the name of Marie Michon. But do not keep Raoul with you."

"Why not?"

"Because he is in love."

"He—he is quite a child."

"And it is a child whom he loves."

Athos became thoughtful.

"You are right, duchess. This singular passion for a child of seven years old may some day make him very unhappy. There is to be war in Flanders. He shall go thither."

"And at his return you will send him to me. I will arm him against love."

"Alas, madame!" exclaimed Athos, "to-day love is like war, and the breastplate is become useless."

Raoul entered at this moment; he came to announce that the solemn entrance of the king, the queen, and her ministers was to take place on the ensuing day.

On the next day, in fact, at daybreak, the court made preparations to quit St. Germain.

Meanwhile, the queen every hour had been sending for D'Artagnan.

"I hear," she said, "that Paris is not quiet. I am afraid for the king's safety; place yourself close to the coach-door on the right."

"Be assured, madame; I will answer for the king's safety."

As he left the queen's presence, Bernouin summoned him to the cardinal.

"Sir," said Mazarin to him, "an *emeute* is spoken of in Paris. I shall be on the king's left, and as I am the chief person threatened, remain at the coach door to the left."

"Your eminence may be perfectly easy," replied D'Artagnan; "they will not touch a hair of your head."

"Deuce take it," he thought to himself, "how can I take care of both? Ah! plague on't, I shall guard the king, and Porthos the cardinal."

This arrangement pleased every one. The queen had confidence in the courage of D'Artagnan, and the cardinal in the strength of Porthos.

The royal procession set out for Paris. Guitant and Comminges, at the head of the guards, marched first; then came the royal carriage, with D'Artagnan on one side, Porthos on the other; then the musketeers, for twenty-two years the old friends of D'Artagnan. During twenty he had been their lieutenant, their captain since the night before.

The cortège proceeded to Nôtre Dome, where a *Te Deum* was chanted. All the people of Paris were in the streets. The Swiss were drawn up along the road, but as the road was long, they were placed at six or eight feet distance from each other, and one man deep only. This force was, therefore, wholly insufficient, and from time to time the line was broken through by the people, and was formed again with difficulty. Whenever this occurred, although it proceeded only from good-will and a desire to see the king and queen, Anne looked at D'Artagnan anxiously.

Mazarin, who had dispensed a thousand louis to make the people cry: "Long live Mazarin," and who had, therefore, no confidence in acclamations bought at twenty pistoles each, looked also at Porthos; but the gigantic body-guard replied to that look with his fine bass voice: "Be tranquil, my lord," and Mazarin became more and more composed.

At the Palais Royal the crowd, which had forced in from the adjacent streets, was still greater; like a large impetuous crowd, a wave of human beings came to meet the carriage, and rolled tumultuously into the Rue St. Honoré.

When the procession reached the palace, loud cries of "Long live their majesties!" resounded. Mazarin leaned out of the window. One or two shouts of "Long live the cardinal!" saluted his shadow, but instantly hisses and yells stifled them remorselessly. Mazarin turned pale, and sank back in his coach.

"Low-born fellows!" ejaculated Porthos.

D'Artagnan said nothing, but twirled his mustache with a

peculiar gesture which showed that his fine Gascon humor was kindled.

Anne of Austria bent down and whispered in the young king's ear:

"Say something gracious to Monsieur D'Artagnan, my lord."

The young king leaned toward the door.

"I have not said good-morning to you, Monsieur D'Artagnan," he said; "nevertheless, I have remarked you. It was you who were behind my bed-curtains that night when the Parisians wished to see me asleep."

"And if the king permits me," returned the Gascon, "I shall be near him whenever there is danger to be encountered."

"Sir," said Mazarin to Porthos, "what would you do if the crowd fell upon us?"

"Kill as many as I could, my lord."

"Hem! Brave as you are, and strong as you are, you could not kill all."

"'Tis true," answered Porthos, rising in his saddle in order that he might see the immense crowd, "there are many of them."

"I think I should like the other man better than this one," said Mazarin to himself, and he threw himself back in his carriage.

The queen and her minister, more especially the latter, had reason to feel anxious. The crowd, while preserving an appearance of respect, and even of affection, for the king and queen-regent, began to be tumultuous. Reports were whispered about, like certain sounds which announce, as they are echoed from wave to wave, the coming storm—and when they pass through a multitude, presage an *émeute*.

D'Artagnan turned toward the musketeers, and made a sign imperceptible to the crowd, but very easily understood by that chosen regiment, the flower of the army.

The ranks were closed, and a kind of shudder ran from man to man.

At the Barrière des Sergents the procession was obliged to stop. Comminges left the head of the escort, and went to the queen's carriage. Anne questioned D'Artagnan by a look. He answered in the same language.

"Proceed," she said.

Comminges returned to his post. An effort was made, and the living barrier was violently broken through.

Some complaints arose from the crowd, and were addressed this time to the king, as well as the minister.

"Onward!" cried D'Artagnan, with a loud voice.

"Onward!" cried Porthos.

But, as if the multitude had waited only for this demonstration to burst out, all the sentiments of hostility that possessed it broke out at once. Cries of "Down with Mazarin!" "Death to the cardinal!" resounded on all sides.

At the same time, through the streets of Grenelle, Saint Honoré, and Du Coq, a double stream of people broke the feeble hedge of Swiss guards, and came, like a whirlwind, even to the very legs of Porthos' horse and that of D'Artagnan.

This new eruption was more dangerous than the others, being composed of armed men. It was plain that it was not the chance combination of those who had collected a number of the malcontents at the same spot, but the concerted attack organized by an hostile spirit.

Each of these two mobs was led on by a chief, one of whom appeared to belong, not to the people, but to the honorable corporation of mendicants, and the other, who, notwithstanding his affected imitation of the people, might easily be discovered to be a gentleman. Both were evidently stimulated by the same impulse.

There was a shock which was perceived even in the royal carriage. Then, millions of cries, forming one vast uproar, were heard, mingled with guns firing.

"The musketeers! here!" cried D'Artagnan.

The escort divided into two files. One of them passed round to the right of the carriage; the other to the left. One went to support D'Artagnan, the other Porthos. Then came a skirmish, the more terrible, because it had no definite object; the more melancholy, because those engaged in it knew not for whom they were fighting. Like all popular movements, the shock given by the rush of this mob was formidable. The musketeers, few in number, not being able, in the midst of this crowd, to make their horses wheel round, began to give way. D'Artagnan offered to lower the blinds of the royal carriage, but the young king stretched out his arm, saying:

"No, sir! I wish to see everything."

"If your majesty wishes to look out—well, then, look!" replied D'Artagnan. And turning with that fury which made him so formidable, he rushed toward the chief of the insurgents, a man who, with a large sword in his hand, tried to clear out a passage to the coach-door, by a combat with two musketeers.

"Make room!" cried D'Artagnan. "Zounds! give way!"

At these words, the man with a pistol and sword raised his head; but it was too late. The blow was sped by D'Artagnan; the rapier had pierced his bosom.

"Ah! confound it!" cried the Gascon, trying in vain, too late, to retract the thrust. "What the devil are you doing here, count?"

"Accomplishing my destiny," replied Rochefort, falling on one knee. "I have already got up again after three stabs from you; but I shall not rise after a fourth."

"Count!" said D'Artagnan, with some degree of emotion, "I struck without knowing that it was you. I am sorry, if you die, that you should die with sentiments of hatred toward me."

Rochefort extended his hand to D'Artagnan, who took it. The count wished to speak, but a gush of blood stifled him. He stiffened in the last convulsions of death, and expired!

"Back, people!" cried D'Artagnan; "your leader is dead, and you have no longer anything to do here."

Indeed, as if De Rochefort had been the soul of the attack, all the crowd who had followed and obeyed him took flight on seeing him fall. D'Artagnan charged with a party of musketeers in the Rue de Coq, and that portion of the mob whom he assailed disappeared like smoke, dispersing near the Place St. Germain L'Auxerrois, and taking the direction of the quays.

D'Artagnan returned to help Porthos, if Porthos needed it; but Porthos, on his side, had done his work as conscientiously as D'Artagnan. The left of the carriage was as well cleared as the right; and they drew up the blind of the window, which Mazarin, less heroic than the king, had taken the precaution to lower.

Porthos looked very melancholy.

"What a devil of a face you have, Porthos! and what a strange air for a victorious man!"

"But you," answered Porthos, "seem to be agitated."

"There's a reason! Zounds! I have just killed an old friend."

"Indeed!" replied Porthos; "who?"

"That poor Count de Rochefort."

"Well, exactly like me! I have just killed a man whose face is not unknown to me. Unluckily, I hit him on the head, and immediately his face was covered with blood."

"And he said nothing as he died?"

"Yes; he said 'Oh!'"

"I suppose," answered D'Artagnan, laughing, "if he only said that it did not enlighten you much."

"Well, sir," cried the queen.

"Madame, the passage is quite clear, and your majesty can continue your road."

In fact, the procession arrived in safety at Nôtre Dame, at the front gate of which all the clergy, with the coadjutor at their head, awaited the king, the queen and the minister, for whose happy return they chanted a *Te Deum*.

CONCLUSION.

ON going home, the two friends found a letter from Athos, who desired them to meet him at the Grand Charlemagne on the following day.

Both of the friends went to bed early, but neither of them slept. When we arrive at the summit of one's wishes, success has usually the power of driving away sleep on the first night after the fulfillment of long-cherished hopes.

The next night, at the appointed hour, they went to see Athos, and found him and Aramis in traveling costume.

"What!" cried Porthos, "are we all going away then? I have also made my preparations this morning."

"Oh, heavens! yes," said Aramis. "There's nothing to do in Paris now there's no Fronde. The Duchess de Longueville has invited me to pass some days in Normandy, and has deputed me, while her son is being baptized, to go and prepare her residence at Rouen; after which, if nothing new occurs, I shall go and bury myself in my convent at Noisy-le-Lec."

"And I," said Athos, "am returning to Bragelonne. You know, dear D'Artagnan, I am nothing more than a good honest country gentleman. Raoul has no other fortune but what I possess, poor child! and I must take care of it for him, since I only lend him my name."

"And Raoul—what shall you do with him?"

"I leave him with you, my friend. War in Flanders has broken out; you shall take him with you there. I am afraid that remaining at Blois would be dangerous to his youthful mind. Take him, and teach him to be as brave and loyal as you are yourself."

"Then," replied D'Artagnan, "though I shall not have you, Athos, at all events, I shall have that dear fair-haired

head by me; and though he is but a boy, yet since your soul lives again in him, dear Athos, so I shall always fancy that you are near me, sustaining and encouraging me."

The four friends embraced, with tears in their eyes.

Then they departed, without knowing whether they should ever see each other again. D'Artagnan returned to the Rue Tiquetonne with Porthos, still possessed by the wish to find out who the man was whom he had killed. On arriving at the Hotel de la Chevette they found the baron's equipages all ready, and Mousqueton on his saddle. "Come, D'Artagnan," said Porthos, "bid adieu to your sword, and go with me to Pierrefonds, to Bracieux, or to De Valon. We will grow old together, and talk of our companions."—"No!" replied D'Artagnan, "deuce take it, the campaign is going to begin; I wish to be there, I expect to get something by it."—"What do you expect to get?"—"Why, I expect to be a marechal of France!"—"Ha, ha!" cried Porthos, who was not completely taken in by D'Artagnan's gasconades.—"Ha!"—"Come, my brother, go with me," added D'Artagnan, "and I will make you a duke!"—"No," answered Porthos, "Mouston has no desire to fight—besides, they have made a triumphal entrance for me into my barony, which will kill my neighbors with envy."—"To that I can say nothing," returned D'Artagnan, who knew the vanity of the new baron. "Here, then, to our next merry meeting."—"Adieu, dear captain," said Porthos; "I shall always be happy to welcome you to my barony."—"True—when the campaign is over," replied the Gascon.—"The equipage of his honor is waiting," said Mousqueton. The two friends, after a cordial pressure of the hand, thereupon separated. D'Artagnan was standing at the door, looking after Porthos with a mournful gaze, when the baron, after walking scarcely more than twenty paces, returned—stood still—struck his forehead with his finger, and exclaimed: "I recollect!"—"What?" inquired D'Artagnan.—"Who the beggar that I killed was."—"Ah! indeed! and who was he?"—"Twas that low fellow, Bonacieux." And Porthos, enchanted at having relieved his mind, rejoined Mousqueton, and they disappeared round an angle of the street; D'Artagnan stood for an instant, mute, pensive, and motionless; then, as he went in, he saw the fair Madeleine, his hostess, standing on the threshold.

"Madeleine," said the Gascon, "give me your apartment on the first floor; now that I am a captain in the Royal Mousquetiers, I must make an appearance; nevertheless: still keep my room on the fifth story for me; one never knows what may happen."

